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PRIVATE EYE

LOCAL ELECTION SPECIAL

GORDON'S PLEA

A Daimler Brand

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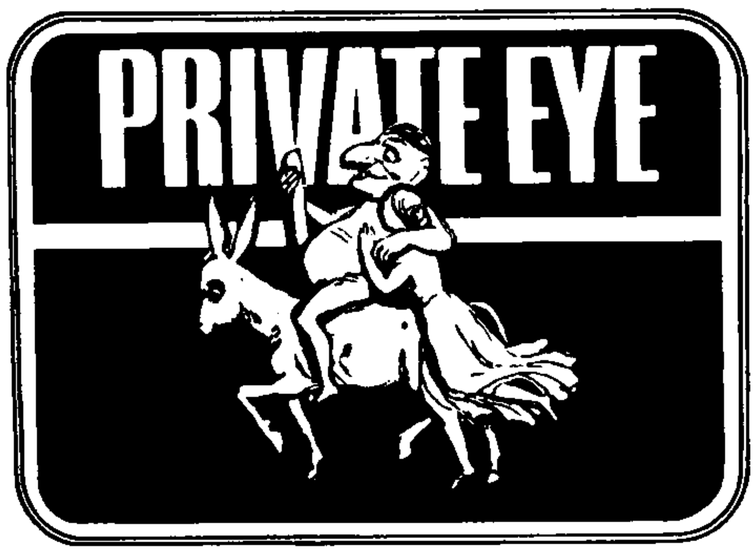

Your nuts in May

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"I'm disillusioned with the government..."

"That's nothing. I'm disillusioned with the next one..."

THE rebellion over the abolition of the 10p tax rate saw Gordon Brown pay the price for stifling dissent during his 10 years as chancellor – not least by ensuring that the loyal John McFall ran the only body that could ever question him in any depth: the Treasury select committee.

That 5.3m people would lose from the tax rise emerged more than a year ago when a Treasury mandarin confirmed at the committee's 2007 budget hearings that economists had been "in the right ball park" with the figure, largely because 75 percent of people eligible for working tax credit claims wouldn't claim them.

Unable to confront the bad news, the following day Brown told the committee: "He didn't say 75 percent wouldn't take it up; he said it was a forecast for public expenditure purposes".

So did McFall's committee – who easily saw through the attempted fudge – demand that the tax raid on low earners be reversed, sparing Brown the far more dangerous row that has now engulfed him? No. It merely suggested an increase in tax credit take-up, concluding: "We therefore welcome the evidence of a recent take-up of working tax credit provided by the Chancellor of the Exchequer... We also note the government's efforts to increase take-up still further." Gordon was off the hook – until now.

When parliament debated the tax raid last June, Brown sent in one of his junior ministers, Stephen Timms, to defend the indefensible. Responding to a Frank Field amendment to the 2007 finance bill, Timms claimed: "I understand the concerns expressed by my right hon. friend and others across the House, but they are effectively addressed by the tax credit changes that are part of the package as well." Except they weren't – and he, Brown and the officials who drafted this wholly misleading riposte knew it.

JUST FANCY THAT?

"Our long term objective is a lower starting rate of income tax of ten pence in the pound"

– Labour 1997 election manifesto

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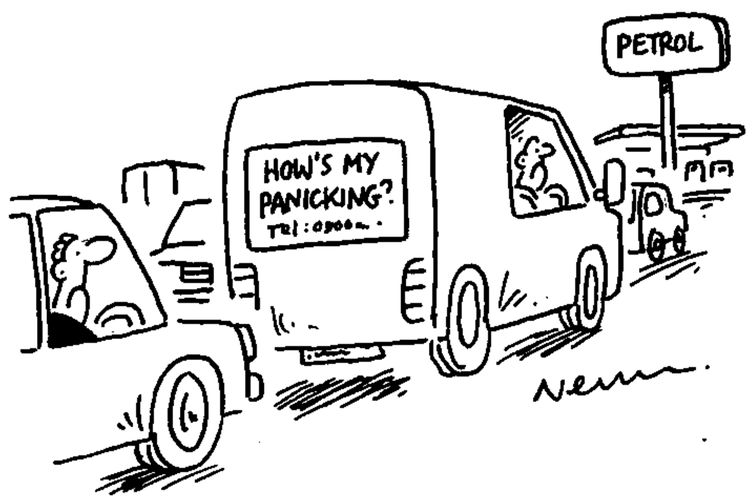
ABC

ASKED last year about Tony Blair's appearance on Comic Relief alongside comedienne Catherine Tate while he was limbering up for the premiership, Gordon Brown was clear to put clear blue water between himself and his predecessor.

"I think we're moving from this period when, if you like, celebrity matters, when people have become famous for being famous... People are moving away from that to what lies behind the character and the personality. People are wanting the concerns that they have discussed in a rounded way. So I'm not sure that the public are in love with trivia," he said.

But that was then. Last week Brown declined an invitation to appear on BBC Five Live alongside the other party leaders in advance of the local elections. Instead he chose to be grilled about the 10p tax revolt and other "challenging and exciting" issues in a webcast for the Labour party website – by Arabella Weir, star of *The Fast Show*.



LAST WEEK in the *Daily Mirror* Alastair Campbell lambasted Tory London mayoral candidate Boris Johnson for being a toff, a racist and a clown who would be a "disaster for London". A "nightmayor" in fact.

The Labour incumbent, Ken Livingstone, on the other hand, had proved to be a terrific success, with great policies on transport, crime and housing, a man of "stature" whose steadiness was just what was needed in the dark days after the terror attacks of 2005.

At the end of the piece was a puff for the paperback edition of *The Blair Years,* Campbell's diaries. *Mirror* readers who buy a copy will find further reflections therein on the character of the "man of stature" Alastair is so keen to see elected for a third term as London mayor.

On Tuesday 16 November 1999, for instance, when Livingstone was threatening to stand as an independent against the official Labour candidate for London mayor, Frank Dobson, Campbell wrote: "We had really fucked this. The only good thing coming out of it was the sense of Livingstone as a totally divisive figure." The following night he mused further on the qualities of the mayor-to-be: "Ken fucking Livingstone... you couldn't believe a word he said."

How fucking refreshing to come across a political figure who is prepared to admit he was wrong!

COVER NOTE
■ See issue 920 for Brown's transformation into Major

KEN LIVINGSTONE, who likes to remind people of his part in winning the 2012 Olympic Games for London at every opportunity, kept a strangely low profile during the procession of the Olympic flame through London recently.

Or perhaps not so strange... The relay, which cost at least £1m to protect from pro-Tibet protesters, was coordinated by Ken's Greater London Authority and the British Olympic Association "in partnership" with the Beijing Olympic committee. Although Ken was originally scheduled to join the Chinese ambassador as the flame passed through Chinatown, he deemed it wiser to keep his head down as 2,000 of the Met's finest and a troop of tracksuited Chinese security goons manhandled protesters.

It is to be hoped that the Chinese did not take offence at the absence of the mayor, who has spent a lot of time, and taxpayers' money, courting the old thugs. When he visited China with a 77-strong party in 2006, £145,000 was spent on flights and accommodation alone. And in 2004, Ken's deputy chief of staff Redmond O'Neill and four other mayoral advisers hosted a lavish dinner in the private dining room of the Bank restaurant, Westminster, to honour eight Chinese representatives, including the deputy secretary of the Shanghai municipal committee of the Communist party of China.

The purpose of both the trip and the dinner was to forge ever-closer links with Tibet's oppressive neighbour, but in the run-up to the mayoral election such intimacy might have proved embarrassing. Still, no doubt Ken's Chinese chums understand.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

£1,000,000 Amount pledged by Tory peer Lord Laidlaw as donation to help UK sex addicts overcome their problems

£25,000 Amount pledged by Tory peer Lord Laidlaw as donation to help non sex-addict Boris Johnson overcome Ken Livingstone

"How embarrassing – he's addicted to the Tory Party!"

NEWS

THE Office of Fair Trading's discovery of rampant bid-rigging in the construction industry was embarrassing for many companies – not least Interserve, which acquired the privatised Property Services Agency.

The OFT's "statement of objection" to Interserve (it has £2.4bn worth of private finance deals under its belt) is especially embarrassing for chairman Lord (Norman) Blackwell who, it turns out, also picks up £15,000 a year as a non-executive director of… the OFT!

Bid-rigging might help explain why the costs of PFI deals routinely rocket once the "preferred bidder" has been named, which was certainly the case at one of the firms fingered by the OFT, Balfour Beatty.

Its contributions to British infrastructure include the Metronet fiasco and huge PFI hospitals such as that at University College London, whose costs more than doubled. In an internal memo seen by the *Eye*, Balfour boss Ian Tyler admits that the firm has had to carry out "comprehensive training and education for all key employees… to ensure that appropriate and inappropriate behaviour is very clearly understood. I am confident that Balfour Beatty and its subsidiaries are now fully compliant with all competition laws." So that's all right then.

Others accused by the OFT include: builders Kier, responsible for 32 schools PFI deals; and Mowlem (now owned by Carillion), which has 21 signed deals and is currently cashing in on the NHS PFI plans for primary care. The OFT acknowledges that its inquiries have only scratched the surface of bid-rigging and doesn't identify specific examples… So watch this space.

AMONG the architects of the "light touch" regulatory system that gave us the credit crunch and now sees taxpayers buying up several banks' mortgage books was Sir Steve Robson.

He was the Treasury mandarin responsible for financial services policy in New Labour's early years (not to mention a host of Tory privatisations before then). But where is he now?

After early retirement in 2001 he was rewarded with a directorship of the bank that has been forced to write down its mortgages by £5bn and go cap in hand to shareholders… the Royal Bank of Scotland!

PS: Desperate to get through the current crisis, RBS is proposing a rights issue. Does it now regret spending an estimated £18m in happier times on a Falcon 50 executive jet with personalised registration (which now spends most of its time parked at Edinburgh Airport)?

NUMBER CRUNCHING

£50,000m Expected value of taxpayer bail-out for mortgage banks

£5,000m Value of Royal Bank of Scotland sub-prime write-down

£5m Annual pay for RBS chief executive Sir Fred Goodwin

Street Of Shame

AN unlikely scene is described in the *Guardian*: the notoriously dour Gordon Brown jumping up and down "like a small kid who had been let out of school for the day", repeatedly shrieking: "I'm prime minister!"

Hard to imagine? Possibly because the tale – recounted in Lord Levy's memoir *A Question of Honour* – actually concerns Tony Blair, days after the 1997 election.

The *Grauniad* only had to copy the story out of the *Mail on Sunday*, which had started serialising the book the previous day – but despite the fact that the accompanying story by political editor Patrick Wintour was devoted to the essential differences between the former and current prime ministers, the paper still managed not to be able to tell them apart.

CONSTERNATION among Fleet Street's personal finance editors, many of whom have been invited by Nationwide Building Society to an England football match.

Nothing unusual in that – Wembley is but Oyster card trip away from their offices – but this one is an all expenses-paid excursion to Trinidad for the England match against Trinidad and Tobago on 1 June.

While most hacks are usually quick to accept a freebie to an exotic locale, this time they are worried that colleagues and readers might find such largesse by Nationwide inappropriate in the credit crunch. Those going to Trinidad for the beano might find it more tricky to criticise the rising cost of Nationwide mortgages and themselves become credibility-crunched. What a dilemma!

THE *Times* used to be a high-kicking cheerleader for New Labour, but with Gordon Brown's administration falling apart it has found another government for which to wave its pom-poms – in Dubai.

Ever since the *Times* started printing a daily edition there last May, the Gulf state has received glowing coverage. The latest instance was a surprise appearance by one Haya Bint Al Hussein in the *Times* comment pages last week, writing about global food shortages. Although few British readers may have heard of her, she is the wife (or, more accurately, one of the wives) of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai.

BUDGETS are tight and the allocation of passes for newspapers even tighter for the Beijing Olympics. So hacks on the *Times* sports desk wonder why new editor James Harding insists there must be a place for him come August.

Perhaps Harding is hoping to show his boss Rupert Murdoch the same fierce scepticism towards the People's Republic that distinguished his predecessor Robert Thomson? Watch this space...

"WHENEVER you hear the words 'New Paradigm' as an explanation for why things are really different this time around, it is time to take out the bullshitometer for some careful measurements." – Willem Buiter, *Financial Times*, 24 July 2007.

"A new paradigm: markets do not self-correct." – Front-page headline in *Financial Times*, 3 April 2008.

BARACK OBAMA, being black, "may be unable to carry large industrial states with socially conservative white working-class populations". After last week's Pennsylvania primary, Anatole Kaletsky informed *Times* readers that "the conclusion would be fairly obvious, were it not for the political correctness that makes it almost impossible for American politicians or commentators to express such a view".

Almost impossible, eh? Yet again, poor Mystic Mug had to eat his words. The very next day the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Democratic activists were "worried about Obama's prospects in the general election" because "working-class white Democratic voters might abandon him for the Republican nominee, particularly in key states". The *New York Times* observed that despite having a huge money advantage and the support of much of the Democratic establishment, Obama "still can't seem to win over large blocs of Democratic voters, especially among the white working class". And *Time* magazine listed the "lingering doubts about Obama", headed by this question: "Can he win enough white working-class voters in the big swing states?" On the evidence of Pennsylvania, it reckoned, probably not.

NEXT WEEK: Anatole Kaletsky on why Mike Huckabee will win the Republican nomination…

NO FEWER than seven official complaints have been lodged with the *Mail on Sunday*'s managing editor, John Wellington, about the behaviour of *Live* magazine editor Gerard Greaves.

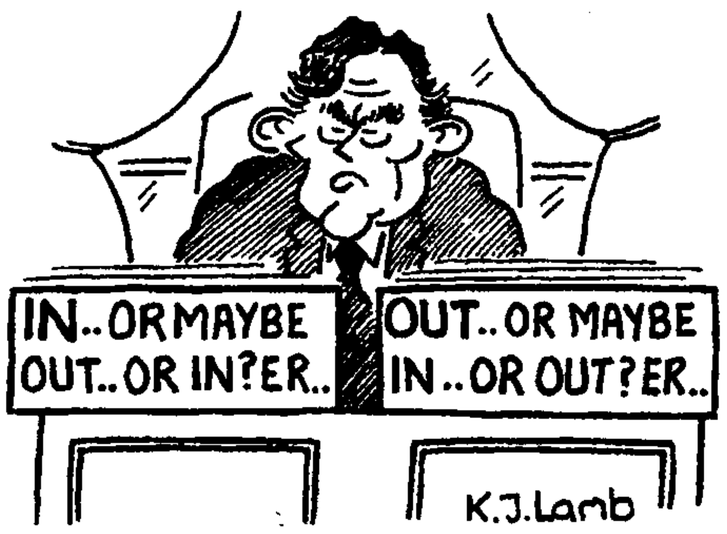
The allegations are proving a real headache because although senior Associated executives would ideally like to ditch the dire mag (which has been a commercial disaster), it has just been voted best supplement in the Press Awards.

The tyrannical Greaves can't understand why he's in the dog house. Not only has he won his masters an award, but the "robust" management style which has prompted so many complaints was learned while he was at the *Daily Mail*, by observing the techniques of editor-in-chief Paul Dacre and his cronies.

REUTERS editor-in-chief David Schlesinger appeared to lose his sense of perspective when turning his hand to eulogy after 23-year-old Gazan cameraman Fadel Shana was killed by an Israeli tank shell.

"Our hearts obviously go out to his family," Schlesinger told staff, though his head was clearly elsewhere. "It is, of course, striking," his memo crassly continued, "that this tragedy occurred on the last day for Reuters as it has been and the day before Thomson Reuters begins."

Cue homilies to this "news and information power", which makes most of its money selling trading systems to banks. And what did any of this have to do with Shana and "more than a century and a half of bravery" from front-line journalists? From Schlesinger, no clue. Just more empty corporate phrase-making: "Reuters news in the new company will forge a new tradition," he went on, "building on the old, that we can all be incredibly proud of."



CHARLIE WHELAN, Gordon Brown's former spin doctor, still acts as an enforcer for his old boss and at the British Press Awards was on his usual thuggish form.

Late in the evening, when Whelan was a little tired and emotional, he was introduced to Vanessa Thorpe, the *Observer*'s arts correspondent. "I'm sure we've met before," said Whelan. Thorpe explained that she was the partner of Martin Bright, the *New Statesman*'s political editor. "In fact," she added, "Martin and I have just got married."

Whelan's face darkened. Brown's aides hate Bright because he investigated allegations against Ken Livingstone in a documentary for Channel 4 and then compounded the offence by writing articles for the *Statesman* that were insufficiently adulatory about the Great Helmsman.

The *Staggers* is of course bankrolled by Geoffrey Robinson, the wealthy Labour MP and one of Brown's oldest friends, and Whelan duly gave Thorpe and listening hacks a rambling monologue in which he insisted her husband and the father of her two children should be fired. "I'm no fan of Livingstone, but Martin Bright should not be political editor after what he did," he said. "I'm going to talk to Geoffrey… He can't allow criticism of Gordon. If Geoffrey's got any sense, he'll listen."

Whelan did not know it, but Brown's power base at both the *Statesman* and at the Robinson-funded Smith Institute nextdoor, a Broonite think tank, is crumbling. Michael Danson, a self-made millionaire, now owns 50 percent of the *Statesman* and Robinson the other half. They must both agree on important decisions, and Danson is very unhappy about politicians telling him who he can and cannot hire. Not only is he not firing Bright, but Bright is actually applying to become the next editor.

CIVIL war has broken out at the *Guardian* after Russell Brand used his pulpit in the weekend sports section to attack two of the paper's other Saturday supplements.

Brand revealed that since Jon Ronson's column stopped appearing in the Weekend magazine, he now tends to "leave Weekend untouched like the detested Jobs & Money section, too boring even to line the cat's litter tray – he'd become constipated rather than defecate on all those tedious career opportunities".

The Weekend, Work and Money sections (Jobs & Money was split into two some years ago) are now preparing their revenge on the sports department – leaving Saturday editor Ian Katz desperately trying to negotiate a peace between his warring factions.

Murray angry at losing his temper

Evening Standard

"THE move to kitchen knives has arguably caused the police more problems than the crackdown on apparently more threatening blades solved," noted the *Independent on Sunday* in its special "Street Crime Issue" on 13 April.

"Cheap knives designed to chop food cost as little as £1 in high-street hardware stores, bringing them within the means of the youngest potential offenders. This rise in the £1 weapon has made them disposable, meaning they can be left in strategic positions for a planned act of violence."

But the *Sindy* can do even better than that! Any wannabe gangsta who made it as far as page 61 of the same edition was rewarded with "a truly SENSATIONAL OFFER! YES! To introduce you to the exclusive Jean-Patrique Kitchenware range our 3-Piece Stainless Steel Professional Oriental Chef's Knife Set worth £119.85 is yours for only 99p – *Yes, really only 99p!"*

DAILY MAILOGRAPH LATEST

IT'S hard for fantasy to keep pace with the even absurder reality at the *Maily Telegraph*. Noting that it had created a new post of "showbiz editor" while dispensing with the religious affairs, social affairs and science correspondents, the last *Eye* asked: "Can a daily horoscope be far behind?"

No distance at all. An eminent ex-*Telegraph* hack points out that the paper already has a horoscope, though so far only weekly, written by a daffy old bird called Catherine Tennant, aka Lady Palmer.

Meanwhile, the sackings continue. Long-serving arts correspondent Nigel Reynolds guessed something was afoot when, for no apparent reason, he was sent to Rugby to film a report for "Telegraph TV" about the menace of oldies driving motability scooters too fast. The film was slyly edited to make Reynolds look like an imbecile ripe for his pension, as he chugged around looking understandably bemused.

Perhaps he will join the queue suing for wrongful dismissal. At least eight hacks have cases outstanding, and some (such as recently-axed science corr Nic Fleming) seem determined to go all the way. *Telegraph* bosses seem equally determined to settle out of court.

The latest settlement is with former education editor Liz Lightfoot, who left last August after deputy editor Tony Gallagher took her into a side room, raised his fist and threatened to "smear you all over that wall" if she didn't write a story the way he wanted it. Alas for Gallagher (a former *Daily Mail* executive), his violent threats were overheard by colleagues who were set to testify on her behalf. To avoid this the *Telegraph* last week agreed to pay Lightfoot more than £100,000.

WHAT hope now for the beano the *Telegraph* usually co-hosts at the Royal Society every January, billed as "Scientists Meet the Media"?

Hacks get to quaff champagne with the likes of Lord Winston and David Attenborough, and editor Will Lewis makes a speech about the paper's passionate commitment to science reporting. But given his decision to dump his science corr (see above) to spend more on showbiz coverage, the champagne might fall a little flat this year...

THE wrecking ball has hit the sports department too, where the regime has hired accident-prone Mark "Skippy" Skipworth as "head of sport".

Skippy has powers over both *Telegraph* titles and the adventure playground that is telegraph.co.uk; but this former boxwallah from the *Sunday Times* newsroom has no discernible experience of sports journalism and appears to feel more comfortable with those who share his ignorance.

Hence perhaps the purging of columnists John Inverdale, Mark Nicholas, Michael Henderson, Graham Taylor and Robert Phillip, who knew a thing or two, and the departure of star interviewer Sue Mott. And who will fill the yawning gap? Step forward Jasper Gerard, the world's worst columnist, aka the *Telegraph*'s new restaurant critic, who made his debut as a sports pundit last Thursday with a picture byline that took up almost as much space as his witless witterings.

Skippy and editor Lewis, who worked with the grinning oaf at the *Sunday Times*, believe Gerard is a "big name" whose stardust must be sprinkled throughout the paper. In the sports department, however, he is known as "our Sally", after the legendary Ms Jockstrap, following the revelation that he is even more clueless about sport than restaurants.

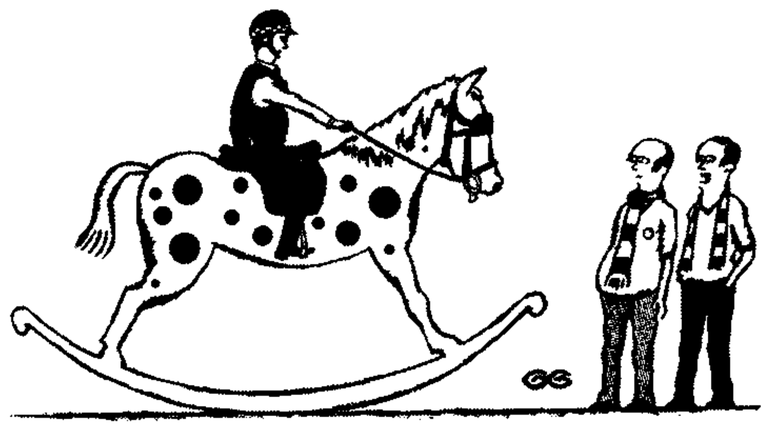
And that's saying something. Recently he gave the Whitstable Oyster Fishery a terrible pasting and dared the restaurant to sue him if anything in the piece was inaccurate. They might have a case, given his assertion that "sealions have been seen in these waters, even venturing up the Thames". *Sealions*? In the English Channel off Whitstable? No doubt they'll soon be playing county cricket for Kent alongside Wayne Rooney…

LUVVIES

"Wesley [Snipes] is like a tree – a mighty oak. He stands for so many, 'like a tree, planted by streams of water with leaves that do not wither'. Many who know him have witnessed the fruit of his labors, have sat in his shade and even been protected by his presence. I am proud of him, proud to call him a fellow thespian and most importantly, proud to call him a friend."

DENZEL WASHINGTON

Extract from character reference supplied by the actor ahead of Snipes' sentencing for tax evasion. The judge gave him three years.



"Is it me, or are policemen getting younger?"

FRANKWATCH

LAST WEEK, Trevor Nunn's production of a musical version of *Gone With the Wind* opened at the New London Theatre. Its reviews were almost unanimously unkind, but the headlines showed that originality, creativity and inspiration abound in Fleet Street…

"Frankly, it is hard to give a damn about this wind." – *Daily Express*

"Frankly, my dear, it's a damn long night." – *Daily Telegraph*

"Frankly, my dear, it's not up to much." – *Daily Mail*

"Frankly, this show is damned." – *Evening Standard*

"By the end of the evening I frankly didn't give a damn." – *Evening Standard*

"Problems with a dated classic: Should we give a damn?" – *Guardian*

"Frankly, my dears, I did give a damn but not as big a damn as I had hoped." – *Times*

"Frankly, I'd give it a miss." – *Sun*

"Frankly, my dear, the critics won't give a damn." – *Observer*

"Frankly, I fear you won't give a damn." – *Sunday Times*

"Frankly, my dear, it's dull." – *Mail on Sunday*

"Frankly, my dear, this is worth a damn." – *Sunday Telegraph*

"Frankly, my dear, it's damned." – *Sunday Telegraph*

"Frankly, my dear, they are all ham." – *Sunday Telegraph*

"Critics? I don't give a damn." – *Sunday Mail*

O·B·N

"The world is a series of rooms, which are arranged like concentric circles, or rooms within rooms, joined by courtyards and antechambers, and in the room at the center of all those rooms Madonna sits alone, in a white dress, dreaming of Africa."

Vanity Fair

Submitted by Adam Smith

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

TALE OF TWO CITIES

IS Gordon Brown really the friend of the poor?

He not only abolished the 10p tax rate, but he treats emergency loans to very rich banks in the City rather differently to the way he treats emergency loans to very poor people in the inner cities.

Since December the Bank of England has offered British banks £15bn in low-rate three-month loans and recently became even more generous, advertising £50bn in loans for banks.

Meanwhile the Department for Work and Pensions helps the poor keep their heads above water with loans from the "Social Fund". Last year it awarded more than 2.6m individual loans worth a total of £688m, but the applicants had to work for their money.

When the work and pensions select committee looked at the Social Fund it found crisis loan applicants whose "fingers ached from pressing the redial button" when asking for money by phone. Those turned down for loans could appeal to the Social Fund commissioner, and when they did, inspectors changed 58 percent of crisis loan decisions. But not all applicants could appeal. Many are refused a loan verbally without a formal decision being made and no record is kept of the refusal.

When the Citizen's Advice Bureau briefed parliament on its caseload it included such Dickensian incidents as a disabled man who went without food for six days because he was unable to get a reply from the phone number and a client and her disabled son who had to sleep rough as their adviser continually got the engaged tone.

The CAB also told how "a man was left with no money over the Christmas period because bank charges following unauthorised direct debits by his gas supplier ate up all his Jobseeker's Allowance. He tried to apply for a crisis loan but was unable to get through, despite trying for two hours in a freezing public phone box."

If only he'd lost billions by reckless investment in the US sub-prime market, Gordon would have seen him all right.

CALLED TO ORDURE

FROM Gordon Brown, the prime minister who promised to respect parliament but then nobbled the Lisbon treaty debate and imposed a Freedom of Information exemption on state-owned Northern Rock, comes another clumsy dodge. He and his whips have tried to "fix" Commons' scrutiny of the plan to lock up suspects for 42 days without trial.

This job is being done by a public bill committee, a new instrument which looks great on paper but in practice is horribly vulnerable to cynical whipery. Take its composition.

The opposition side is pretty impressive: various ex-soldiers, criminal lawyers and even a hint of ex-MI5 (Tory MP Ben Wallace, ex-Army, did secretive things in Northern Ireland). The Labour majority, alas, is battery chicken quality. The best of them is probably Martin Salter, the gobby one-time lorry driver from Reading. Salter occasionally has independent ideas. That can hardly be said of other committee members such as Adrian Bailey (West Brom W), Andrew Gwynne (Denton), Sharon Hodgson (Gateshead E) and Phil Wilson, the practically monosyllabic new MP for Sedgefield.

When the 42 days idea was debated in the Commons chamber recently it was opposed by eight Labour backbenchers. Not one of them, surprise surprise, has made it on to the committee. Why not? Because the whips say who gets to serve and they don't want anyone causing trouble. Only three Labour backbenchers spoke up in support of the counter-terrorism bill in the original Commons debate… and every single one of them is now on the public bill committee!

But it's not just the Labour committee members who are a problem. The committee chairman is proving a nightmare, too. John Bercow (Buckingham) is officially a Tory but it is an open secret at Westminster that he has made a political journey from the far right to the soft left and there have been repeated rumours (denied) that he could defect to Labour.

The astonishingly pompous Bercow is also said to want to become the next speaker. If he has any hope of doing so he will need Labour MPs to vote for him. Indeed, his only hope of becoming speaker may be in becoming the candidate the Tories least want, because Labour MPs would then be more likely to support him.

In his chairmanship of the public bill committee so far he has been amazingly rude to Crispin Blunt (Reigate). Educated at Wellington College and Sandhurst, Blunt is the man who brought down Iain Duncan-Smith – but is also just the sort of Tory "toff" Labour class warriors view with suspicion.

On the committee's first day Bercow immediately picked a fight with him. Repeatedly he shouted Blunt down, preventing him from asking difficult questions and from making "political" points. Er, isn't Westminster supposed to be "political"?

If these new public bill committees eventually shove select committees out of the way (the latter ask too many awkward questions), and particularly if they are chaired by such egregious figures as Bercow, the Establishment will be delighted.

But Labour should be wary of encouraging Bercow simply because he is helping prevent punchy scrutiny of the 42 days embarrassment. His strident chairmanship could set an unhealthy precedent which would make life much easier for any incoming Tory government. And if Bercow indeed becomes speaker of the Commons, God help us all.

'Gavel Basher'

FOREIGN Secretary David Miliband refers to democracy and human rights in a way that hasn't been heard since Robin Cook held the job – and Turkmenistan is one of the repressive states in his sights.

He made another commitment to the cause in March with his annual human rights report which warned: "Some countries with the worst human rights records appear each year. It is important to keep the spotlight on the likes of North Korea, Turkmenistan and Belarus… The UK will continue to lobby Turkmenistan to address human rights issues."

The Foreign Office describes Turkmenistan as a "one-party state" where allegations of torture make the place a "major country of concern". But are any of Miliband's colleagues listening?

Energy minister Malcolm Wicks recently issued a press release headed: "Energy-rich Turkmen visit UK". He was excited that Turkmenistan's vice-premier, Tachberdy Tagiev, was coming to Britain for "talks on how Britain could help Turkmenistan exploit its large reserves of oil and natural gas".

Somehow amid all the talk of oil, gas and money there's was no time to mention democracy or human rights.

WHEN Ruth Kelly left education to become Transport Secretary she picked up the poison chalice that is the renewable fuel transport obligation.

The UK government introduced a 2.5 percent blend of biofuels for all road transport this month, purportedly to aid climate change goals despite concerns that the rush into biofuel crop production is unsustainable and contributes to rising food prices.

In fact the initiative is a mockery as most of the renewable fuels will be sailed across the Atlantic from the US, presumably defeating their purpose in cutting carbon emissions. US biofuel producers are able to undercut Europe due to a loophole which allows them to collect subsidies in their homeland and then a second time when they reach their destination.

European producers are furious at the lack of government response to their plight; and although Peter Mandelson, the EU trade commissioner, has listened to their concerns and highlighted the issue with colleagues, he doesn't think the issue can be solved anytime soon.

Kelly, meanwhile, has responded to the biofuel backlash by asking the Renewable Fuels Agency to review whether the current policies are sustainable. Wouldn't it have been more sensible for someone to have checked on this before introducing biofuels?

DASH FOR WIND

WHEN planners in Maidstone, Kent, gave permission last year for an anemometer to measure wind speeds at Peter Hall's farm on the outskirts of the village of Marden, they probably imagined the feasibility study would show the site would never be windy enough to make a proposal for the borough's first giant wind turbine viable.

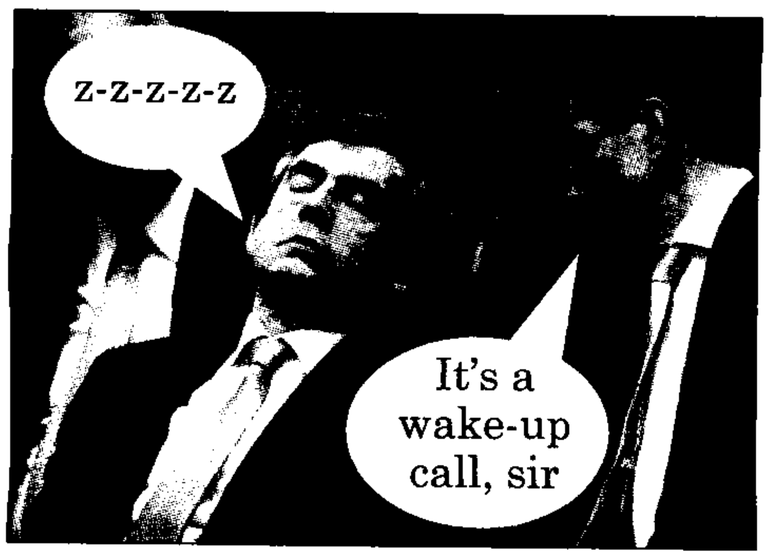
But they failed to realise they were up against the combined might of Wind Direct, a leading evangelist in the UK's "Wind Rush", and Hazel Blears, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

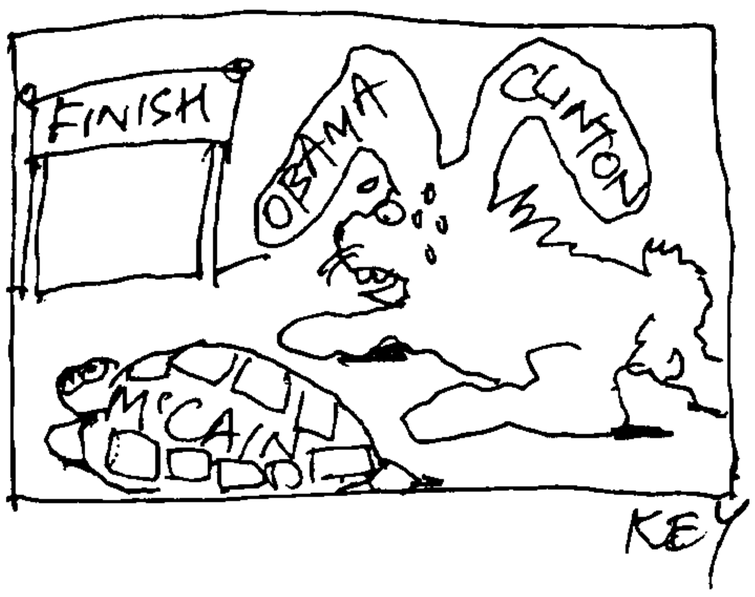
Wind Direct never actually bothered to build the test mast (not really surprising as it may have revealed the inconvenient truth that this part of the Low Weald is, er, not terribly windy). Instead Wind Direct submitted a plan for a 127m high turbine to provide farmer Hall with electricity for his fruit-packing houses, the surplus to be sold to the National Grid.

Even Wind Direct hasn't been able to conceal the fact that Mr Hall's packing houses are two miles away from the turbine site, across many people's properties and on the other side of the London-Dover railway line. Nor will much power be transmitted to the National Grid either, as Wind Direct has omitted to include connecting power lines in its plans. Mr Hall's neighbours are also wound up at how close the turbine will be to their homes.

Maidstone planners did call for a full environmental impact assessment (EIA); but Wind Direct appealed, anxious to avoid a detailed study of the impact on this quiet stretch of the River Teise. And who stepped forward to save the day for Wind Direct? None other than Hazel Blears, who waved away near-universal objections to announce last month that an EIA was not necessary.

LABOUR POLL SHOCK





GORDON OF KHARTOUM

GORDON BROWN took many people by surprise two weeks ago with his offer to host Darfur peace talks in London – especially the members of Britain's diplomatic and development corps in Sudan, as he didn't bother to warn the embassy in Khartoum or the team from the Department for International Development (DfID) about his headline-grabbing announcement.

The UN/African Union peace envoys Jan Eliasson and Salimn Ahmed Salim weren't informed either, even though any London conference would have to take place under the authority of the AU and UN.

British ambassador Rosalind Marsden was away on a trip through eastern Sudan and only found out when an official who had heard the news on the radio gave her a call. Officials spent the rest of the day scurrying to check the details of Gordon's offer and trying to explain to the furious Sudanese authorities why they hadn't been consulted about the arrangements.

Cynics might wonder if Brown simply decided to grab some easy publicity on the eve of Global Day for Darfur by making promises he wouldn't have to deliver – rather as he did last July, after a Franco-British *mini*-summit in Paris, when he suddenly pledged that he and President Sarkozy would visit Darfur, Khartoum and neighbouring Chad to ensure "the peace process is moving forward". Nine months on, nothing more has been heard of it.

Irritation among British officials and diplomats at Gordon's latest stunt was compounded a few days later by the unexpected arrival in Khartoum of the ludicrous Labour peer Lord Ahmed and former *Sunday Express* hackette Yvonne Ridley, launching a peace initiative on behalf of "British Muslims". The first the FCO heard of this mission was when hacks in Khartoum rang to ask whether it had Whitehall's blessing.

Bizarrely, Ahmed and Ridley were stewarded around Khartoum and Darfur by David Hoile, whom older readers may recall from the 1980s as a noisy Conservative student famous for wearing "Hang Nelson Mandela" stickers. Having allied himself with an exotic assortment of rebels and terrorists over the years – the Nicaraguan Contras, Unita in Angola, Renamo in Mozambique – he now works as an adviser and apologist for the Sudanese government, mainly through his European-Sudanese Public Affairs Council in London. (He styles himself "Professor Hoile", as a visiting professor of political science at the University of Khartoum.)

So, in short, a struggling UN/African Union peace effort in Sudan is undermined by Gordon Brown's unsolicited intervention – which, days later, is itself undermined by an unsolicited intervention from a freewheeling British peer and celebrity convert journalist, aided by a notorious right-wing lobbyist from London who dismisses all talk of genocide in Darfur. The poor mandarins – British, UN and African Union – are feeling understandably befuddled. And the fighting in Darfur continues: last week the UN upped its estimated death-count from 200,000 to 300,000.

SQUARE BASHER

DESPITE a string of complaints about pain relief medication arriving hours late, soldiers being left to lie in their own faeces and inevitable outbreaks of MRSA, the NHS hospital at Birmingham Selly Oak remains the first port of call for troops wounded in combat in the 'Stan or the Sandpit.

It is well known that visits from loved ones can raise morale and speed recovery, and a scheme is now underway to develop accommodation for the families of those being treated at the hospital.

Given what Gordon Brown said in his first speech as prime minister – "we honour all those who in distant places of danger give so much to our country", describing health care as "a fundamental right", is the government funding the new accommodation? No. It has been left to a charity, The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) to find the cash.

Already struggling to find enough wheelchairs for amputees and enough rooms to rent for families who have just been told that a loved one

has been seriously wounded in combat, SSAFA is now begging on the internet for funds. "We still need to raise a substantial amount of money," it says, asking "anyone in a position of influence within the defence industry or other major company" for help.

JOB SHARE SPECIAL

THE man responsible for getting the best deal for taxpayers on their 35 percent stake in nuclear generator British Energy, currently attracting a number of bidders, has a hefty task on his hands. The firm has become hugely valuable since the government's conversion to a nuclear future. But will chairman Sir Adrian Montague, who also stands to trouser £100,000 from his shares, be up to the job?

As well as chairing British Energy, Sir Adrian is at the helm of another FTSE 100 company, Friends Provident. And the insurance company's recent woes have certainly been putting a strain on Montague: last November he stepped into the position of *executive* chairman when chief executive Philip Moore was forced out. A spokesman at Friends Provident's London head office confirmed that Montague's was a full-time job, which the company's latest results suggest pays £450,000 a year.

Somehow multi-tasking Montague also manages to chair FTSE 250 recruitment firm Michael Page and the PFI company he created, Infrastructure Investors. Then there are directorships of PFI builder Skanska, Swedish firm Cellmark AB, the London First business lobby group and the Waterways Trust to squeeze in.

So how is Montague earning his £225,000 a year as chairman of East Kilbride-headquartered British Energy when he's already working full-time in the capital and juggling two more chairmanships and four further directorships? A spokeswoman cited recent commercial success and Montague's attendance at all board meetings, claiming it was "completely satisfied" with his performance.

Chairing two FTSE 100 companies is already frowned on under "corporate governance" codes. (Although British Energy wasn't in the FTSE 100 when Montague took the Friends chairmanship three years ago, it soon joined it after one of its government bail-outs). When one job is a full-time executive position it's gone far beyond the pale, but if the individual has yet more substantial chairmanships and directorships he really is taking the proverbial.

The government body responsible for the taxpayer's interest in British Energy is the Shareholder Executive. Its spokeswoman said it was "satisfied no rules have been broken" and whether he was doing the job was a matter for British Energy. That's the government looking after your interest in the nuclear industry for you.

Murray Simpson, the chief executive of the Textile Services Association which represents dry cleaners, said it would carry out spot checks on its members.

Daily Telegraph

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

ALARMING new research has raised questions about biometric passports issued in the EU according to a standard template set out by the European Commission in 2004.

The passports hold personal data in radio frequency identification (RFID) chips, which send out wireless signals across short distances. When the commission put forward the specifications, it trumpeted that they enhanced "security and reliability". But it hasn't taken long for computer whizz-kids at Dutch and German universities to trash that claim.

Unlike American passports, which protect the RFID chips with metal strips so they can only be read if the passport is opened and placed in front of a reader, EU passports encrypt the signal sent out by the chips. This can be broken by "brute force" attacks – trying every possible encryption key until the security barrier is unlocked. Some countries have made this easier by handing out passport serial numbers in sequence. D'oh!

Even easier, though, is identifying which country has issued a passport. The Commission ePassport technical standard was not standard enough, so different national passports send out slightly different signals, which can be quickly interpreted. Researchers speculate that these weaknesses could be exploited to create bombs that explode if someone of a particular nationality comes close (this has even been demonstrated in a Youtube movie, though this has been removed from the website as "inappropriate").

But worry not: the British passport website makes the point that the passports send out a wireless signal "just a few centimetres". Er, or not: the researchers have shown that eavesdropping on the passports is possible as far as nine metres away.

JUDGE AND JURY

WITH the prison population at record numbers, the criminal justice system can seem to treat offenders harshly. But its senior figures show their merciful side when they deal with one special group of miscreants: themselves.

Last year (*Eye* 1190), the *Eye* covered the story of Mr Justice Peter Smith, who achieved brief fame when he heard the *Da Vinci Code* plagiarism case and inserted his own coded message in his judgment.

He was merely being silly, but his behaviour grew murkier when he decided that his £164,000 salary wasn't high enough and tried to make his fortune with the corporate law firm Addleshaw Goddard, who wanted to offer its clients the opinion of a real ex-judge. Smith demanded a £750,000-a-year package to cover his services and those of an assistant, a price that was too high for Addleshaw, and in the spring of 2007 the negotiations degenerated into a rancorous email exchange.

A few weeks later, he was scheduled to hear a case to which Paul Howell, a partner at Addleshaw Goddard, was a party. Naturally, Howell asked Smith to step aside because of the blatant conflict of interest. But Smith refused to budge and harangued the court. When told by a barrister that his language was "intemperate", he replied: "It's about time you grew up. If you think this is intemperate then you're on another planet to me."

Amazed lawyers ran to the appeal court, which issued an emergency ruling that Smith had to stand down. They referred the case to the Lord Chancellor and Lord Chief Justice, who sent it on to the Office of Judicial Complaints. Lawyers and legal journalists assumed that the authorities would say that a judge without judgment had to go.

Instead, Smith received a reprimand, one of the mildest punishments available. Lord Phillips of Worth Matravers, the Lord Chief Justice, said he hoped a line could now be drawn under the case. "Both I and the Lord Chancellor value the services of Mr Justice Peter Smith and he has my full confidence," he said.

The quality of mercy is not strained when the law deals with its own. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven.

'Ratbiter'

NUMBER CRUNCHING

£16 Amount Thai journalist Kamol Kamotrakul was paid for his *Bangkok Business News* column accusing Tesco of aggressive expansion

£1,600,000 Amount Tesco is personally suing him for

EVERTON FC, which proclaims itself a "People's Club", has decided to sue its own fans – or those at least who contribute to the website keioc.net (as in "Keep Everton In Our City").

The club is peeved by adverse comments on its plan to relocate from the historic Goodison Park to Kirkby – a scheme that prompted the gleeful Liverpool crowd to chant "You're not Scousers any more!" at the last local derby. The fans have invited the club's chief executive Keith Wyness to a public debate on the controversial relocation, but have received only writs.

Well, almost. Everton's clodhopping lawyers have issued proceedings not against keoic.net but keioc.com – the website of a dental practice in Japan!

HIGH PRINCIPALS

A BRIGHT idea from Doncaster College's third principal in four years, Rowland Foote: appoint more bosses!

Just a few months after taking over the jinxed job, Foote has plans to triple the college's management team to include two deputy principals, six vice-principals and, er, six assistant principals.

Students and lecturers can't fathom how Doncaster will pay for all this extra leadership. The college still hasn't recovered from the huge deficit left by the last-but-one principal, George Holmes (*Eyes passim*); and last year Ofsted described its financial status as "weak".

Not only that but the college revealed this month (under pressure from the Information Commissioner) that it paid its next principal David Gates £163,000 in compensation after dismissing him last year. Given that he received one of the top salaries in further education during his long suspension, Gates pocketed more than £300,000 for working two academic terms. Trebles all round!

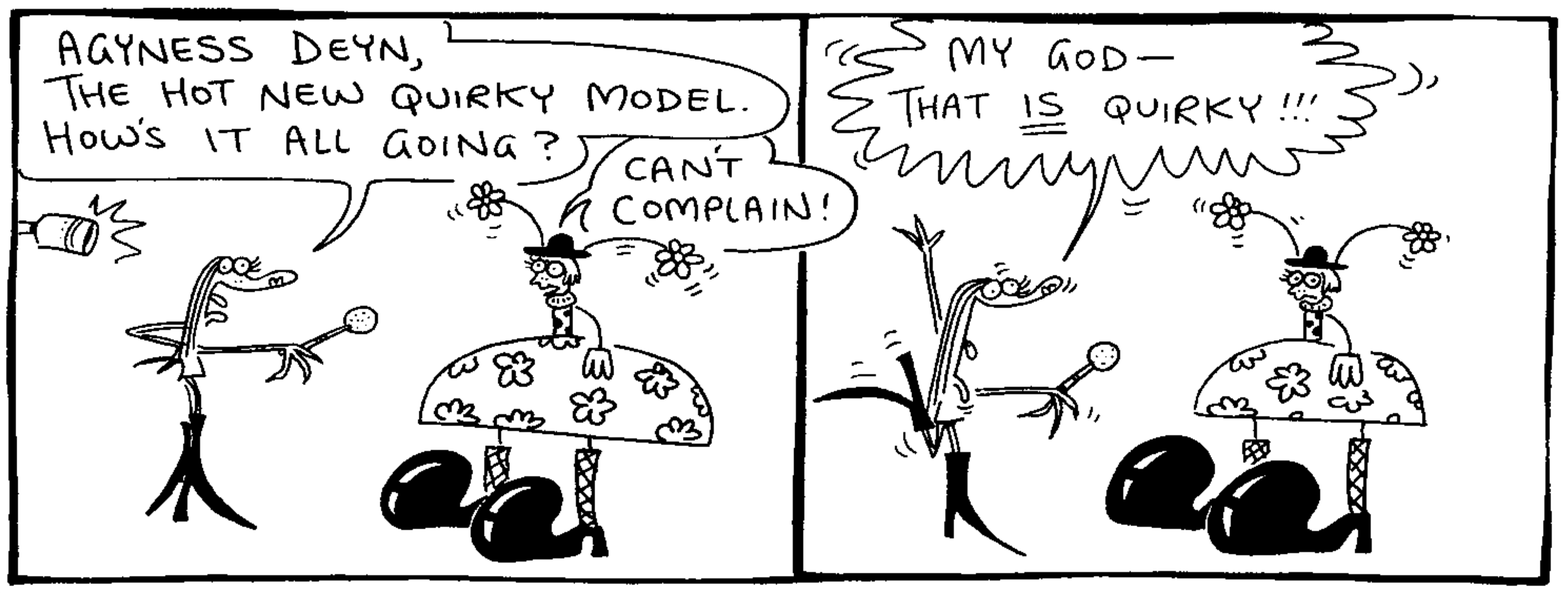
NUMBER CRUNCHING

£2.40 Price of the train ticket which student Jared Ahmad failed to produce when stopped in March, as a result of which he was arrested and will have his DNA stored on the national database indefinitely

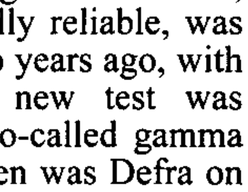
£24.50 Price of the train ticket which former PM Tony Blair failed to produce when stopped in April, as a result of which he was allowed to travel free on Heathrow Express

SUPERMODELS

KERBER



Down on the Farm



ONE reason taxpayers might take an interest in the TB epidemic that has been exploding through our cattle herds is that it is becoming extremely expensive. It is already costing us £90m a year. Within six years, according to the government's own figures, the total bill will have reached £2bn – or £80 for every taxpayer.

But have no fear. For once this column will not be mentioning the link between bovine TB and Britain's similarly exploding badger population. Our focus will be solely on the surreal recent events surrounding the supposedly scientific tests used by the Department for the Elimination of Farming and Rural Affairs (aka Defra and Blindra) to establish whether cattle have been exposed to TB, from whatever source. (If they are shown to be infected, of course, they are shot at taxpayers' expense: 27,589 of them last year).

For years the recognised diagnostic method, generally accepted as scientifically reliable, was known as the "skin test". But two years ago, with much fanfare from Defra, a new test was introduced from Australia, the so-called gamma interferon or "blood test". So keen was Defra on its new procedure that, if it shows an animal as "positive", no further test is necessary and the animal is shot. By contrast, if the skin test shows a negative result, a blood test can be asked for as confirmation.

The odd thing is that even Defra admits on its website that the blood test is likely to show up many more positives than the skin test because it is much less specific. To put it bluntly, the gamma interferon test is very much cruder than the skin test. It picks up exposure to all sorts of infections unrelated to cattle diseases, providing no way of distinguishing them.

Many farmers have become so frustrated by the number of "false positives" thrown up by the blood test that several have recently been queuing up, at considerable expense, to take Defra's insistence on gamma interferon to judicial review. The first case to come before Mr Justice Mitting was brought by a group of organic farmers from Somerset, whose 486 cattle were tested last year under the skin test, only 14 showing positive. But when Defra insisted on retesting them, using gamma interferon, this rose to 86 (official figures show that no fewer than 81 percent of all cattle destroyed after being shown as positive by the blood test proved at post-mortem to show no sign of disease).

Mr Justice Mitting dismissed the arguments of the farmers' learned counsel, ruling that Defra's "policy is lawful". Another farmer who has been waiting to bring Defra's policy to court, however, was Tom Maidment of Pewsey, 31 of whose cattle had been condemned after the blood test had shown them as positive. He pleaded in vain with Defra in London for the chance to have them retested using the skin test. But, unaware of this, his local Defra Animal Health Office told him his cattle should be skin tested after all. The results showed a resounding negative. Not one of his animals showed any sign of having been exposed to TB. And what was Defra's response? It naturally ordered that all the animals should nevertheless be destroyed at taxpayers' expense. Who gives a fig for science when someone else is footing the bill?

'Muckspreader'

MEDICINE BALLS

There's only one NHS

THE Welsh assembly's proposal to abandon the internal market and fund the health service centrally in a spirit of co-operation will make the NHS in Wales very different from its English counterpart. The changes would give a huge amount of power to health minister Edwina Hart, and their success depends on how wisely she uses it.

During the last election Tony Blair took the piss out of Wales for its long waiting times compared to England, but independent research published by the CHKS consultancy last month found that median waiting times over the last five years for four procedures (cataracts, knee replacement, hernias and rectal excision) had fallen at the same rate as in England, without throwing vast sums of money at the problem or handing over work unnecessarily to the private sector.

Wales has dabbled with private surgery for NHS patients, but results have not always been encouraging. Since April 2004, Cardiff and Vale NHS Trust has sent 227 patients (requiring 254 knee replacements) over the bridge to the independent sector treatment centre (ISTC) at Weston-super-Mare. All of these patients were offered a review at Cardiff and Vale Orthopaedic Centre and 27 required reoperation (10.6 percent). As the researchers[1] put it: "These results are considerably worse than those reported in the current published literature and have resulted in a significant economic impact on our service."

Unlike heart surgery, where side effects are often immediate and catastrophic, it can take several years to accumulate evidence of sub-standard care for joint replacements. However, it seems that the practice of flying in European surgeons at a loose end to operate in unfamiliar surroundings with unfamiliar teams and prostheses is having unacceptable failure rates. The NHS is not entirely blame free – for years consultants allowed sub-standard surgery from colleagues to pass unsupervised or unnoticed – but the focus on quality and safety that followed the Bristol Inquiry has been submerged under Labour's rush into "marketisation".

The NHS has long relied on the use of the private sector to provide psychiatric and elderly care, and GPs and pharmacists are independently employed. There should be no ideological barrier to using services from the private sector for companies that buy into the NHS ethos and deliver better value or service than the NHS can. What's needed is hardball purchasing to ensure the NHS gets what it needs and isn't ripped off. This is where the NHS in England has failed so miserably.

Building hugely expensive, monolithic PFI hospitals and then deciding to shift services out to the community is a financial disaster. ISTCs were never needed – a deal could have been struck with existing private hospitals to take on operations the NHS couldn't manage – and yet Labour again opted for the symbolism of new buildings that are now underused and the NHS is obliged to buy back. Millions have been spent on management consultants telling experienced NHS managers what they already knew. And the tariff system at the centre of the health market is fiendishly difficult to administer fairly and very costly.

Small wonder the Welsh are giving up on the market. Whether the "new" spirit of co-operation will be less protectionist than its predecessor in the 1980s remains to be seen, but the Welsh experience with waiting lists has shown that you don't need to spend a fortune and invite competition, you just need good information on demand and capacity and the motivation of NHS staff who want to do their jobs properly.

M.D.

[1] *PJ Kempshall, A Metcalffe, MC Forster: Cardiff and Vale Orthopaedic Centre*

SIGNAL FAILURES

Scots boo hoo

THE Spineless (*shurely "Scottish"? Ed.*) National Party has bottled out of leading the way in renationalising Britain's railways.

Removing ScotRail from private hands would have made public service, rather than profit, its primary objective. That in turn would have set a precedent for the rest of the country and increased pressure for an end to the nightmare of railways mired in bureaucracy, fragmentation and conflicting goals. But once the SNP took control of the Scottish parliament last May, it immediately began diluting its long-standing policy of turning ScotRail into a not-for-profit operation.

It had already ditched its commitment to regulation of bus services, after Stagecoach bus tycoon Brian Souter gave the SNP £500,000 (*Eye* 1199). Then in June a spokesman told the *Scotsman* that rail nationalisation could not be addressed this parliamentary term because First ScotRail's franchise wasn't due to end until October 2011, after the next election. (That was a red herring: the Scottish parliament had already bought out private contractors, scrapping the Skye bridge PFI deal in 2004 and the Inverness airport-terminal PFI deal in 2006.)

The SNP's transformation into a poodle of private transport was completed in April when the SNP administration suddenly announced that it had extended First ScotRail's contract to 2014, although the existing deal still had more than three years to run. Transport minister Stewart Stevenson said the extension followed an exceptional performance by First ScotRail and "brings significant benefits to passengers and delivers value for money for the taxpayer".

What a contrast to the SNP's pronouncements in opposition, when shadow transport minister Kenny MacAskill said: "It's time to take our train network back into public hands. This will remove the profit element... and allow all our money to be used to maintain and enhance the network instead of disappearing into the pockets of shareholders. The Tories' privatisation has been an unmitigated disaster, both in terms of service to the customer and cost to the taxpayer."

And has First ScotRail's performance really been exceptional? The rail regulator's latest statistical digest shows only 87 percent of First ScotRail services running on time, despite the comparatively high proportion of trains under 10 years old in its fleet. That's well behind the 91 percent of Arriva Trains Wales – lumbered with some of Britain's crappiest old trains – and not far ahead of the 85 percent of Northern Rail, which has some equally poor rolling stock.

First ScotRail is unusually well subsidised in the British context. In 2006-07 it received £275m subsidy – more than any other rail franchise. That was 14 percent of Britain's total subsidy to franchisees (First ScotRail accounts for 4 percent of passenger-kilometres travelled on franchised trains). Network Rail spends about 10 percent of its budget in Scotland, which has around 4 percent of Network Rail's track. Are we really to believe nobody except FirstGroup could run 87 percent of trains on time in these circumstances?

■ PS: April was a glorious month in Scotland for Aberdeen-based WorstGroup. On 1 April traffic commissioner Joan Aitken said she could no longer be lenient on First Scotland East – following the third public inquiry into pisspoor performance in three years – as "that has not worked to the degree needed: the heavy fist of regulation must be un-gloved". Yet the fine she imposed, £132,000, looked more like an April Fool's joke than a punch to make FirstGroup (annual turnover: £3.7bn) mend its ways. On 3 April First ScotRail's franchise extension was announced. On 14 April First ScotRail announced a 4.9 percent fare rise in the Strathclyde region (where most of its passengers travel). And on 16 April the Competition Commission signalled above-inflation fare rises for Strathclyde and Edinburgh bus passengers by relaxing the fares cap imposed as a condition of FirstGroup's takeover of Strathclyde Buses (*Eye* 1151) – a takeover branded "against the public interest" by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

'Dr B Ching'

JUST FANCY THAT!

"[Alistair] Darling said the Strategic Rail Authority was also to work with train operators to restructure the ticket regime with the aim of introducing a simpler system by 2004."

– BBC News, June 2003

ECO WORRIER

Talking crap

THE general advice to people seeking to live the eco-lifestyle to the full by composting their own excrement has long been: don't.

Indeed, any form of carnivore waste, such as pet faeces, should only be recycled under carefully monitored conditions, always kept separate from other compostable waste, and preferably not used on gardens where food is grown. Foot and mouth fuelled new fears about the potential spread of animal disease to humans via animal waste. Not to mention the thousands of potentially dangerous pathogenic organisms that live in human waste. To put it less technically, dumping crap on your garden is a shit idea.

Bizarrely, this generally accepted principle seems to have gone unnoticed by one company keen to cash in on the green consumer craze. The charmingly named "Naturebotts" has been calling round hacks promoting its new "Eco Nappy". This innovation is a decomposable nappy you can return to mother Earth by throwing it on the compost. A press release from a PR outfit called "Sore Thumb Marketing" boasts that the product is "guilt-free". It also cites "scientific" evidence that American experiments on tomato crops have shown that adding worm compost will increase production by up to 33 percent (alas the release doesn't say whether dirty nappies formed part of the compost on that particular trial). Web links to other "scientific" studies showing the benefits of the Eco Nappy were either defunct or yet to be updated.

Upon probing a little further, it seems that actually Naturebotts recommends composting the nappies using a wormery. In fact you'd need a contraption two metres square, which presumably very few people would have lying around in their back garden.

When pressed, the company said it does advise people to put the compost on shrubs and not on places where they are going to grow food. But how many people are going to use different composts on different parts of their garden? And what about the risk of spreading human disease as the stuff gradually seeps through the soil? Sore Thumb Marketing's slogan is: "Making You Stand Out from the Rest". They've certainly succeeded on this occasion.

EYE TV

The Baron (ITV1)

IN Hollywood, projects that turn out to be terrible – the eighth or ninth sequel to a dead-horse franchise, any collaboration between Madonna and Guy Ritchie – are released straight to DVD.

In television, the equivalent stinkers used to be quietly shelved. But, with budget cuts and multiple 24-hour digital channels to fill, no broadcaster can afford quality control. Anything that has been made and paid for simply has to see, if not the light of day, then at least the dark of night. Even something as fish-rottingly terrible as **The Baron**.

Nobody looks to reality TV for taste or class but *The Baron* isn't even bottom of the barrel: its toxic ridiculousness has burned through the base wood and is now threatening to go through the foundations of the sewer underneath as well.

The conceit is that the remote Scottish community of Gardenstown has run out of the line of barons who had exercised titular rule since feudal times. Improbably, and through a process which the programme never explains, the villagers have agreed to have their new baron chosen through a reality TV show, in which three "celebrities" compete for the title.

Astonishingly, in a TV production equivalent of an act of self-harm, the producers show the tension building up in the simple cliffside homes as the locals await the arrival of the bus containing the international A-listers whose names have been withheld from them to raise the anticipation. "Pamela Anderson might be nice," fantasies one inhabitant. Others send up prayers for Julie Christie, Stephen Fry and Jason Donovan.

As viewers are grimly aware that even Jason wouldn't stoop to be in something as gruesome as this, the only point of this sequence can be to chortle at the unrealistic expectations of the Gardenstownies and sneer at the deflation they will feel when they see who the researchers have actually managed to book.

But who exactly is this joke on? Because the poor sods sitting in front of the box, and being enticed to watch the project for three weeks, can only feel exactly the same disappointment when out of the charabanc come two reality TV retreads – Suzanne Shaw, who once won *Pop Stars* and *Dancing on Ice*, and Malcolm Maclaren, who walked out on *I'm a Celebrity* – plus Mike Reid, big Frank from *EastEnders* who is, er, dead.

Mr Paxman – The Lean Years

"Come on!! Come on!!"

Sometimes, the last piece of work completed by a TV personality can serve as a proper obituary tribute when screened after their death. But not, as in this case, when a visibly tired man can only have been doing it for the money and when the editing seems oblivious to numerous unfortunately morbid overtones, such as the comic's comment that he is entering this context because having a title is "the last thing that I want". And, given that the guy died of a sudden heart attack, how smart is the sequence in which the commentator warbles about "67-year-old Mike" stopping and wheezing as he pulls his suitcase up a steep hill?

Within the limits of who they could get to take part, the producers have gone as far as they possibly can for the holy grail of reality TV: conflict casting. Most of the population of Gardenstown are born-again Christians who disapprove of drinking, smoking and fornication before marriage. So, hey, let's send in unmarried mother Suzanne, dope-smoking atheist Malcolm and Mike, most famous for playing a pub-owner, and whose central campaign promise is 24-hour drinking.

For maximum embarrassment, the 'slebs have to lodge with the locals and you can almost hear the team sniggering behind the cameras as Malcolm's hosts warmly offer that "we'd like to share our love of Christ with the celebrity we get". Whatever you think of faith, it's bad faith for TV to treat ordinary people like this. But this cynical collision of opposites seems to have worked so well that programme one was able to feature a teaser for programme two, in which Maclaren appears to be chased out of town by a Christian lynch mob in what looks like a moment from *The Wicker Man*.

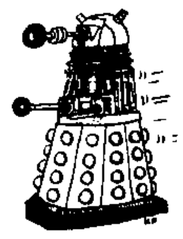
Ethically repugnant, *The Baron* is also technically inept. The first episode seemed to start twice, with the same basic information about the island and the contest spoken both before the opening credits and immediately after them. And, incredibly, the same teaser clip – of Suzanne reading a negative comment from a focus group and swearing – was shown five times in a 50-minute show, deployed at the very beginning and then before every commercial break.

It's always risky to declare something the worst television programme ever made. But *The Baron* would really struggle to sue anyone who made the accusation. If it's good accounting practice for everything that's produced to reach the screen, then ITV needs some new accountants. You couldn't even release this straight to DVD. It should be released straight to delete.

'Remote Controller'

Relocation,Relocation
AND IF PROPERTY PRICES CONTINUE TO FALL...
NO ONE WILL WANT TO SELL THEIR HOMES...
SO THEY WON'T WANT TO WATCH SHOWS LIKE THIS...

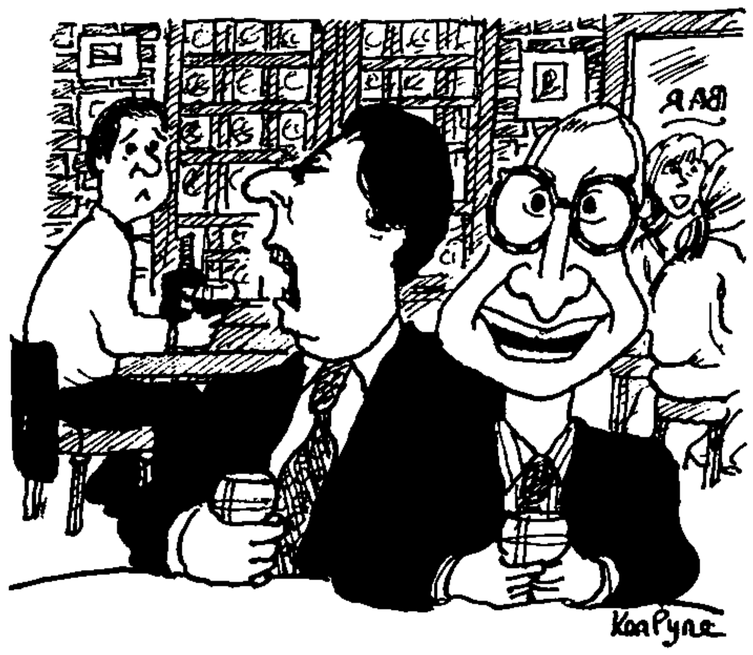
BIRTSPEAK 2.0



"IT'S not intended to be a massive visual change, but an evolution and clarification of what we are about, to enable audiences to recognise BBC News whenever and wherever they receive it.

"Alongside the look we're also changing some names, also to emphasise the identity of BBC News. The BBC1 bulletins at 1, 6 and 10 become 'BBC News at One', 'BBC News at Six' and 'BBC News at Ten'... Younger people use BBC News less than older viewers. In a competitive environment news content, especially when accessed via aggregation sites, is sometimes hard to identify. Clarifying and reinforcing the BBC News brand is about defending its values for the future, not throwing those values away... Rather than reinforcing a metro-centric impression we want to make sure BBC News is embedded in our first class output in the nations and English regions."

– Peter Horrocks, Head of BBC Newsroom, on the £550,000 rebranding of BBC News



"Oi! You looking at my Birt?"

MEDIA NEWS

ALWAYS happy to give the BBC a good kicking, the Sun cleared a spread last Friday for a rant from occasional columnist Ian Wright, who had quit his job as a football pundit for the Beeb after deciding that he was employed as a "court jester".

"What do viewers get for their money?" the former Arsenal striker demanded. "Cookery programmes, *Strictly Come Dancing* – and an unbelievable amount of repeats... They have lost live cricket, boxing and football, the three main sports that people watch on television, so what is it that we're paying for?" Well, for one, there was the £700,000 a year over three years that the BBC blew on a contract for Wright to present a series of pisspoor chat and gameshows.

He was equally outraged by "these posh journalists on some of the broadsheet newspapers saying 'Wright is wrong'. They claim that I can't string a sentence together and that I don't sit straight in my chair." Actually, it's not just broadsheet hacks who say this, as *Sun* editors would realise if they read their own TV critic Ally Ross, who has described him variously as "unintelligible", "the worst" of all the soccer pundits and a "bandwagon-jumping half-wit" who instead of playing the race card when time was finally called on his presenting career "should just... shut up, for once".

Wright also criticised the BBC's decision to employ sacked England manager Steve McLaren as a radio commentator for this summer's Euro 2008 competition, as the *Sun*'s own editorial column did a few days before. For some reason neither saw fit to mention that McLaren's debut as a pundit came on, er, Sky Sports. What was mentioned, however, was the real reason Wright was asked to write his piece: that "the charismatic star [is] set to front the relaunch of *Gladiators* on Sky One."

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: In a concert at the London Astoria in 1967, who set his guitar on fire for the very first time?
Contestant: Neil Diamond.
Robinson: The novels by Dorothy L Sayers feature the aristocratic detective Lord Peter who?
Contestant: Snow.
Robinson: Which national newspaper is nicknamed "The Grauniad" because of its reputation for making typographical errors?
Contestant: The Sun.

University Challenge: The Professionals, BBC2

Jeremy Paxman: Of all Beatrix Potter's books, which is the only one to feature a human in the title?
Antony Beevor (eminent author and historian): Peter Rabbit.

IS Sky News finally beginning to learn from the fakery fiascos that have dogged its invitations to "citizen journalists" to participate in the newsgathering process (see *Eyes passim*)?

As presenters invited viewers to send in their photographs of the London Marathon, a senior editor put out a warning to staff to scan all submissions carefully to check that Madeleine McCann wasn't lurking in the crowd. Had the missing toddler been spotted in the capital? No, she is just the favourite subject of Photoshoppers keen to have their moment of fame on the Sky website.

No such problem, however, for the grim reaper, who made a black-cowled appearance on a Docklands street behind one octogenarian runner, runners sponsored by "Bad Aids" and banners reading "I ♥ Clunge" and "Fergal is a Cunt" which were happily displayed on the Sky website…

THE recent BBC4 series *Sacred Music* was one of the best classical music projects to have graced the box in years: intelligent, serious and presented by someone (Simon Russell Beale) who was neither pseudo-hip nor a celebrity gardener.

That said, it suffered one big problem: a desperate lack of budget that cut the intended run from eight programmes to four, and then dictated a pathetic compromise. The idea was to have the stunningly good choir the Sixteen sing the music in the places for which it was written: St Peter's in Rome, St Thomas's Leipzig, etc. But then the BBC accountants said, er, no way. Which meant the Sixteen (clearly far too heavy on Ryanair fares for the Beeb to countenance) were filmed in what was limply called "an Italianate church in London" and "a Lutheran-style church in London", rather than being flown to Rome and Leipzig.

In the case of Rome, however, money wasn't the sole reason the Sixteen had to stay at home. The Vatican had refused to let them in. In fact, the Vatican has been blacklisting the BBC, Mugabe-style, and slapping interdicts on even the most godly film proposals that come out of London. Why? Because it doesn't like the way the Beeb has covered its history of priestly sex scandals. "Unnecessary vigour" is the stated view.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

MODESTY BLAZE

"Keith was a genius, John was a genius, I was certainly on the edge of genius... but Roger was just a singer."

– *Pete Townshend,* Amazing Journey: The Story of The Who, *BBC4, 18 April*

AD NAUSEAM

MORE on the alarming propensity of well-paid admen to take the credit for other peoples' ideas.

Berocca's new ad, for example, seems unusually brazen. Made by JWT, it features a group of dreary executives who take a Berocca tablet and are instantly transformed in to pepped-up street performers. Incredibly, someone has left a bank of gym-style running machines on a nearby pavement and so they hop on board and start performing dance routines, using the rolling floor of the treadmills. "Berocca," runs the strap. "You, But On a Good Day."

The treadmill dance is an idea copied in its entirety from a 2006 music video for a song called "Here It Goes Again" by the American band OK Go! This should be shocking news, except that regular readers will know that advertising "creatives" these days are more like jackdaws, stealing ideas from music videos, the visual arts and pretty much anything they happen to stumble upon via Google. They call it inspiration.

The remarkable thing about Berocca/JWT's craven bite is that OK Go!'s video has hardly crept in under the cultural radar. Go to YouTube, type "OK Go", and you will see that not only is the band's video a far superior, genuinely inventive production, but that, as of writing, it had received 33,397,910 views. It has also achieved critical recognition, winning the 2007 Grammy award for Best Short-Form Music Video. In other words, a sizeable chunk of the people watching the Berocca ad must know it is a lame copy, the agency knows it's a lame copy and still it is happy to take money from Berocca's parent company Bayer for someone else's idea.

ON 5 MAY BT launches its new BT Business campaign, and the exciting news is that TV entrepreneur Peter Jones is set to replace Gordon Ramsay as the face of the campaign. "He embodies the entrepreneurial spirit," said Bill Murphy, managing director of BT Business.

The campaign will feature Jones helping some "Hollywood guest stars" to solve IT problems. But have BT Business not read Jones's riveting, widely-available book *Tycoon*? (see Literary Review, *Eye* 1187).

If they had, they'd know that Peter Jones is the chairman and chief executive of a Telecoms business called Phones International Group, with whom he made a large part of his fortune. PIG's long-term objective, according to Jones himself, "is to be recognised as a market leader within the Telecoms Solutions arena." How charitable of BT to give free publicity to a direct competitor!

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Shop and dine in style at Terminal 5. With over 80 shops and a wealth of cafes, restaurants and bars, Heathrow Terminal 5 is more than just an airport. Allow plenty of time to browse..."

– Marketing email sent out by British Airways, 23 April

POP EYE

WITH former cash cow Robbie Williams on indefinite leave hunting aliens in the Nevada desert, EMI is staking all on the forthcoming album by school-run favourites Coldplay. But no one's singing while they work at the company's HQ.

Citigroup Inc, the US bank that financed Guy Hands' purchase of EMI last year through his private equity company Terra Firma, has decided the $5bn of loans aren't marketable because of "investor anxiety" over the group's future. As a result, the company plans to cut 1,500 to 2,000 jobs – no mean feat from a global workforce of just over 5,000. Since Hands has given the music publishing division a clean bill of health, other parts of the company seem likely to lose close to one in every two jobs. Those lucky enough not to be fired will have to reapply for their jobs, be psychometrically tested and re-interviewed. Happy times indeed.

One industry expert believes Hands' final solution began with the removal of popular chairman and chief executive Tony Wadsworth in January. "That was Hands saying, 'We can – and will – fuck any single one of you.' It was about breaking people's spirit and bringing in a new culture of spreadsheets and executives with only a passing interest in music."

EMI says it will now focus on two frontline labels – Virgin and Parlophone – but the game may well be up, with many of the most popular acts looking to leave under "key man" clauses (if their key contact at the company leaves, they are allowed to terminate their deal immediately). Is a fire sale of prime assets (say the Mute label, Abbey Road Studios or even that last jewel in its crown, EMI Publishing) before the end of the year out of the question?

NUMBER CRUNCHING

£1.6m Pre-tax profit of Channel 4 last year

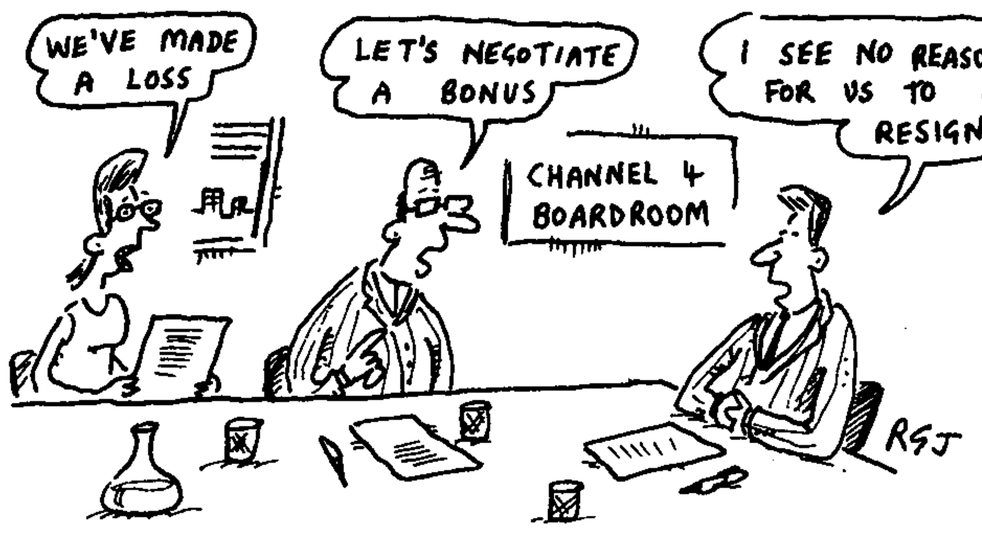
£1.5m Fine levelled by Ofcom on C4 programmes for phone scams last year

£1.2m Paypacket of C4 chief executive Andy Duncan last year

OH, YEAH? "He reaches behind a photograph of Kerry Katona sitting on the window ledge and brings out a black and white picture: 'EMI records,' he says, pointing at the building in the photograph, 'my back, George Martin, the Beatles. First publicity pictures they did – six weeks before Love Me Do. I was 19. Right time, right place.' Does he miss the music industry? 'No, no,' he says brusquely. 'Not at all, nah, nah. I think we were the lucky ones – we launched the Beatles, we launched Motown, Smokey Robinson, Stevie Wonder, Woodstock I did, Bob Dylan, Joe Cocker, Simon and Garfunkel, Jimi Hendrix, Beach Boys, Bee Gees, Cream, Isle of Wight festival.' That sounds like quite a handful. 'It was easy!' he declares."

– Interview with Max Clifford, *Guardian*.

Those Channel 4 Shows



Dirty Sexy Money **Deal Or No Deal** **Shameless**

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

SHEFFIELD STEAL

THE people of Sheffield are puzzling over how and why their council let the city's airport, on a site worth potentially £400m, fall into the hands of developers for just £1.

For years Sheffield was the biggest city in Europe without its own airport. In the 1980s the Labour council agreed that an open-cast mining company would extract the millions of tons of coal which lay beneath a derelict industrial site, then reinstate the land with an airport runway on it. The then Sheffield development agency put in the infrastructure and the airport opened in 1997 with flights to Amsterdam, Dublin, Belfast, London and Jersey. All appeared to be going well. Then a deal was struck with Peel Airports, which also manages Liverpool John Lennon, Durham Tees Valley and the new Doncaster Robin Hood airports, to run the airport for seven years.

Peel, a subsidiary of property giant Peel Holdings, took over in August 2001, shortly before 9/11, when the aviation industry worldwide suffered a major, but temporary, downturn. But while other airports rapidly recovered, Sheffield City stayed in the doldrums – even though short-takeoff business flights from airports close to city centres were a rapidly growing area.

Much of the infrastructure within the terminal, such as check-in desks, security screening zones, and baggage reclaim areas, was stripped out and the space filled with offices. Air traffic control and fire and rescue capabilities were downgraded. This seemed bizarre, as the airport operating company was supposed to be using all "reasonable endeavours" to drum up business. Scheduled flights ceased in 2002. The airport closed, apparently for good, last week.

Unbeknown to most Sheffield taxpayers, the council had a "memorandum of understanding" with Peel that allowed the company to buy the freehold of the 70-acre site for £1 should the airport prove "unviable". With Peel's rival Doncaster Robin Hood airport due to open in 2005, and the land worth a fortune for housing or industrial use, it hardly added up to much incentive to make the airport a success.

Meanwhile local steel millionaire Andrew Cook, a fan of Sheffield city airport who describes the council's handling of the affair as "negligent, reckless and incompetent", has briefed m'learned friends with a view to challenging the £1 sale and has even offered to buy the airport himself. But it may all prove too little, too late.

NOWT DOING

LAST year *Eye* 1199 reported how Oldham council's Labour leader David Jones was standing by one of his councillors who had been convicted of benefit fraud. Last issue we reported on the case of the former Labour councillor (now "independent") who is clinging to his seat despite being accused of raping a 16-year-old girl. Meanwhile a third Labour councillor is awaiting trial on another serious criminal charge.

Well might Cllr Jones declare that what the council needs is "a wake-up call". So is he about to purge the sleazier elements of his party? Er, no. What Jones has in mind is the council's exciting new logo *(see left)*, on which £100,000 of taxpayers' money has just been spent. For that they also get a barrowload of bullshit about how it will "overturn negative perceptions" of the borough. Locals are calling it "the big fat zero". How can they be so negative?

LBRuTISH BEHAVIOUR

RESIDENTS of Hampton, south-west London, are celebrating a rare victory over the officers of the London borough of Richmond (LBRuT), who have been exposed as arrogant and uncommunicative over a six-year period in which the council has been variously controlled by the Lib Dems, the Tories, and now the Lib Dems again.

Out of the blue, one morning in June 2005, contractors arrived at the local park, Buckingham Fields, grubbed up a supposedly protected hawthorn hedge and erected a hideous 10ft welded metal fence around an area of nearly two acres. When locals asked what the hell was going on, the council claimed it was a lottery-funded project to enclose a football pitch for the local secondary school, Hampton Community College. This was puzzling, because the school already had five pitches elsewhere on the park, which it no longer used, and said it didn't want another. The school *had* requested that a lottery application be made to upgrade the school's gym and loos, but at a cabinet meeting in March 2002 the Lib Dem council ignored this and ticked the box marked "fence" without any discussion. Officers then submitted an imaginative £50,000 lottery bid explaining how the fence would benefit hundreds every day and earn income – by charging locals for what they had always enjoyed for nothing.

With the fence shutting them out of a large part of their park and a cabinet recommendation under the by-now Tory administration to flog off another part of it to a resident who fancied a bigger garden for £32,000, locals applied to put the land on the commons register. The council countered with "private property" notices to prohibit people accessing the park "as of right". But in November 2006 a committee of backbench councillors granted the village green status against the protests of senior council officers and refused even to read a tortuous legal case in favour of the fence, which had been prepared by outside lawyers for £7,000. Free access to the park for all was simply a matter of commonsense, they declared.

Earlier this month a "scrutiny task group" composed of lay people and backbench

"Oh, I forgot to tell you – I switched our energy supplier"

councillors reported on the affair and lambasted the council's officers for multiple failures to consult or communicate with the public properly and failing to keep proper records. It revealed that the idiotic decision to build the prison-style fence was made in the inner sanctum of the council's chief executive, Gillian Norton. And it revealed Ms Norton's contempt for the hundreds of residents who campaigned to save their park, describing them as "the tyrannical articulate minority". No wonder the locals think she's worth every penny of her £153,246 a year!

● CITYWEST Homes, the "arm's length" company which manages Westminster council's housing stock, is inviting oldies to get in touch if they need any help with a variety of tasks, including "filling in forms". To avail themselves of the service all the tenants have to do is, er, fill in a form!

BARKING MAD

CONSULTANTS Rockpools, whose headhunting arm so spectacularly cocked-up the recruitment of a new chief executive for Newham council last year (*Eye* 1202), have put in another impressive performance, this time down the river at Barking and Dagenham.

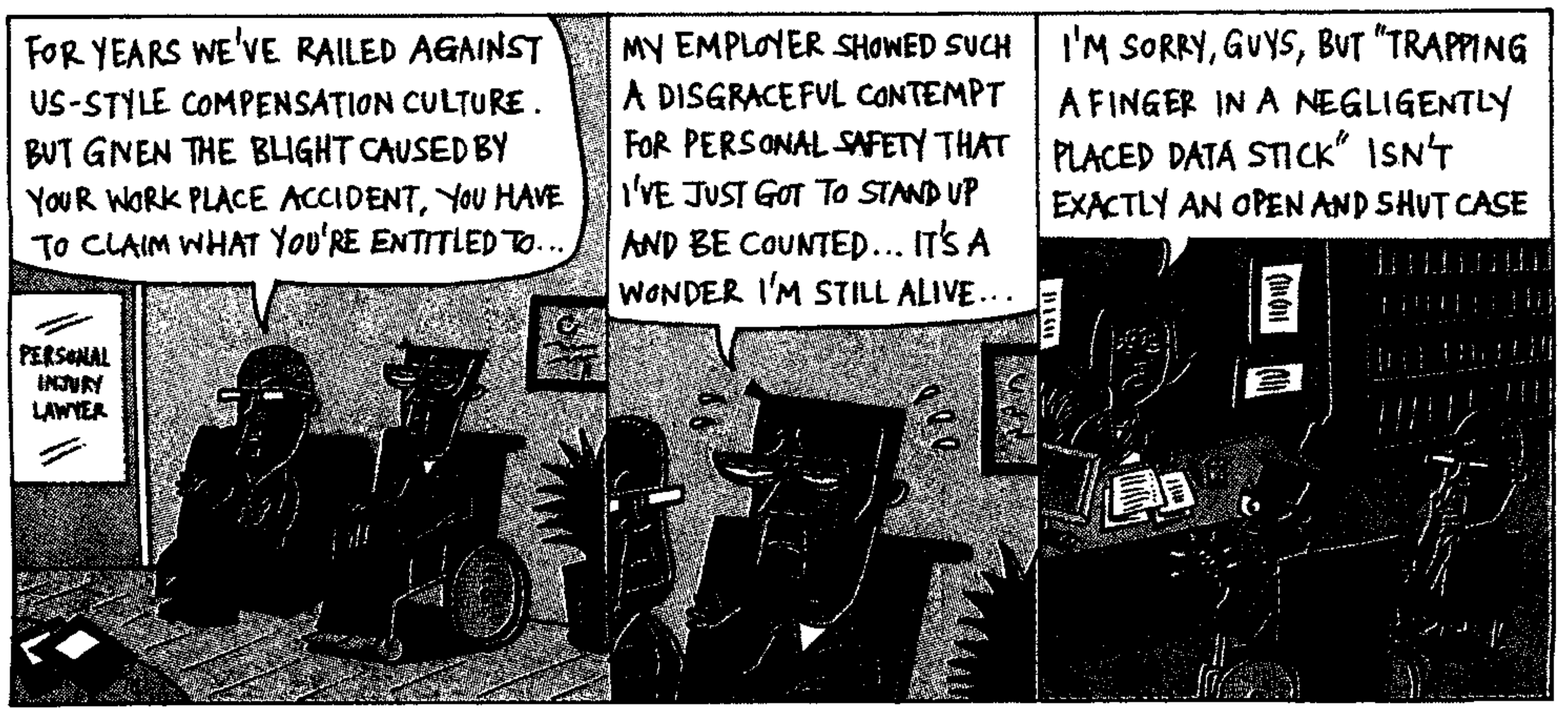
Rockpools trousered an easy £90,000 when commissiowned to "review" B&D's legal services department. Its 65-page report lambasted the department as "weak, expensive, opaque, out of date and invisible". Rockpools recommended the council "re-structure its legal services department by modelling it on a private sector law firm". This would mean appointing three senior "partners" on salaries of £95,000 each, each with deputies on £65,000 – a grand total of £480,000. Trebles all round! The council's existing legal staff got the message that they needn't bother applying when Rockpools put a link to the supposedly confidential report on its website.

Finding half-a-dozen highly-paid legal hotshots, of course, is a complex business. You can't just put an ad in the paper [*Why not? Ed*]. You need to hire an expensive firm of "executive recruitment" specialists – Rockpools, for instance – and pay them yet more huge fees to do the job for you. It's only taxpayers' money, after all.

● SHARP practice in South Wales, where two non-aligned ratepayer members of Neath Port Talbot council, both set to be re-elected unopposed on 1 May, jumped ship to Labour at the eleventh hour. Juliet Hopkins and Peter Richards claimed to believe that "people come first". But not, it seems, when it comes to offering them a choice at the ballot box. Ratepayer leader Andrew Tutton only learned of the switch 15 minutes before nominations closed – ensuring he had no time rustle up any replacements. "It's cheated the people of Baglan ward," he told the *Eye*. Labour council leader Derek Vaughan said: "It was all done in accordance with party rules." So that's all right, then.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER


FOR YEARS WE'VE RAILED AGAINST US-STYLE COMPENSATION CULTURE. BUT GIVEN THE BLIGHT CAUSED BY YOUR WORK PLACE ACCIDENT, YOU HAVE TO CLAIM WHAT YOU'RE ENTITLED TO...
PERSONAL INJURY LAWYER
MY EMPLOYER SHOWED SUCH A DISGRACEFUL CONTEMPT FOR PERSONAL SAFETY THAT I'VE JUST GOT TO STAND UP AND BE COUNTED... IT'S A WONDER I'M STILL ALIVE...
I'M SORRY, GUYS, BUT "TRAPPING A FINGER IN A NEGLIGENTLY PLACED DATA STICK" ISN'T EXACTLY AN OPEN AND SHUT CASE

NOOKS and CORNERS

IS THE London Olympics swallows more and more public money, ordinary citizens who don't live in Hackney or possess the "Olympic spirit" (whatever that is) are finding it ever harder to exercise by swimming. Now another pool faces closure thanks to a local authority's incompetence.

The centenary of the foundation stone laying of Ripon Spa Baths was marked with public celebrations in 2004. The baths had been opened by Queen Victoria's daughter, Princess Beatrice, in 1905 and were converted into the city's swimming pool in 1934. Designed by S. Stead, like many contemporary baths the building has a jolly terracotta front, almost *art nouveau* in character. Inside, there are ornamental glazed tiles and fine stained glass. In consequence, Ripon Spa Baths are listed grade II.

The swimming pool is popular, and there is a waiting list for children who want to learn to swim there. But as swimming pools are expensive to maintain, the local authority has allowed it to deteriorate. Now Harrogate borough council claims the baths have "severe structural problems", so it proposes to sell the building for conversion into luxury flats and to put the proceeds towards building a new swimming pool.

These proposals have caused outrage locally. The Ripon Civic Society, the Ripon City Amateur Swimming Club and the Harrogate & Ripon Water Polo Club have all protested and a 3,128-signature petition has been delivered to the council (and the population of the Yorkshire cathedral city is only 16,000).

The *Save Our Spa!* campaign also points out that the sale of the site is only likely to raise £1.1m while the estimate for the new pool is £3.9m, while – according to the council's own condition report – the cost of renovating the existing swimming pool is only £1.3m. Furthermore, the new pool the council wants to build on a children's playing field will have fewer facilities than the present one, and local swimming clubs say it will be too small. So why on earth is Harrogate council so keen to close the present, popular Ripon Spa Baths?

The proposed new pool will have a projected life of only 30 years while the present pool has already been in use for more than a century and – if properly maintained – could go on for many years yet.

Apart from a silly prejudice against old buildings and a naïve assumption that new is better, the reason so many Victorian, Edwardian and later swimming pools have been closed is that they are costly to maintain. But whizzy new pools are also expensive to run – as Hackney council found to its cost over the Clissold Baths which closed within months of opening (see *Eyes* 1114 and 1156). The truth is that if running swimming pools is a worthwhile thing to do, it is more cost-effective to look after, renovate and properly maintain good old (beautiful) swimming pools like Ripon Spa Baths than to build cheap, flashy new ones.

IN POOR OLD Bath, meanwhile, Cleveland Pools Trust's plans to reopen the city's Georgian lido, opened in 1815, are being undermined by Bath & North-East Somerset council's determination to sell the site.

The (listed) open-air pool closed in the 1970s but the trust, founded in 2004, has produced a feasibility study to show how it could be reopened and modernised. But the local authority would rather be rid of the Cleveland Pools, saying it wants to see "innovative plans" for its use. The trust's innovative use? **Swimming.**

MORE from the European Capital of Culture 2008 where, to no one's surprise, Liverpool city council recently agreed to the demolition of the former Lying-In Hospital in Hope Street.

This will facilitate expanded development by the Maghull Group, which began to demolish its façade in February before permission had been given (and was one of the sponsors of Liverpool's yacht at the MIPIM junket at Cannes in March – see *Eye* 1207).

This has outraged those who care about Liverpool's historic fabric and one of them, Philip Coppell, a Beatles tour guide, emailed the managing director of Maghull to express his disgust. The reply he received was surprising. I hesitate to repeat it in a family paper, but as it has already appeared in the *Liverpool Echo* and revealing the nature of favoured developers in the Capital of Culture is in the public interest, I shall do so.

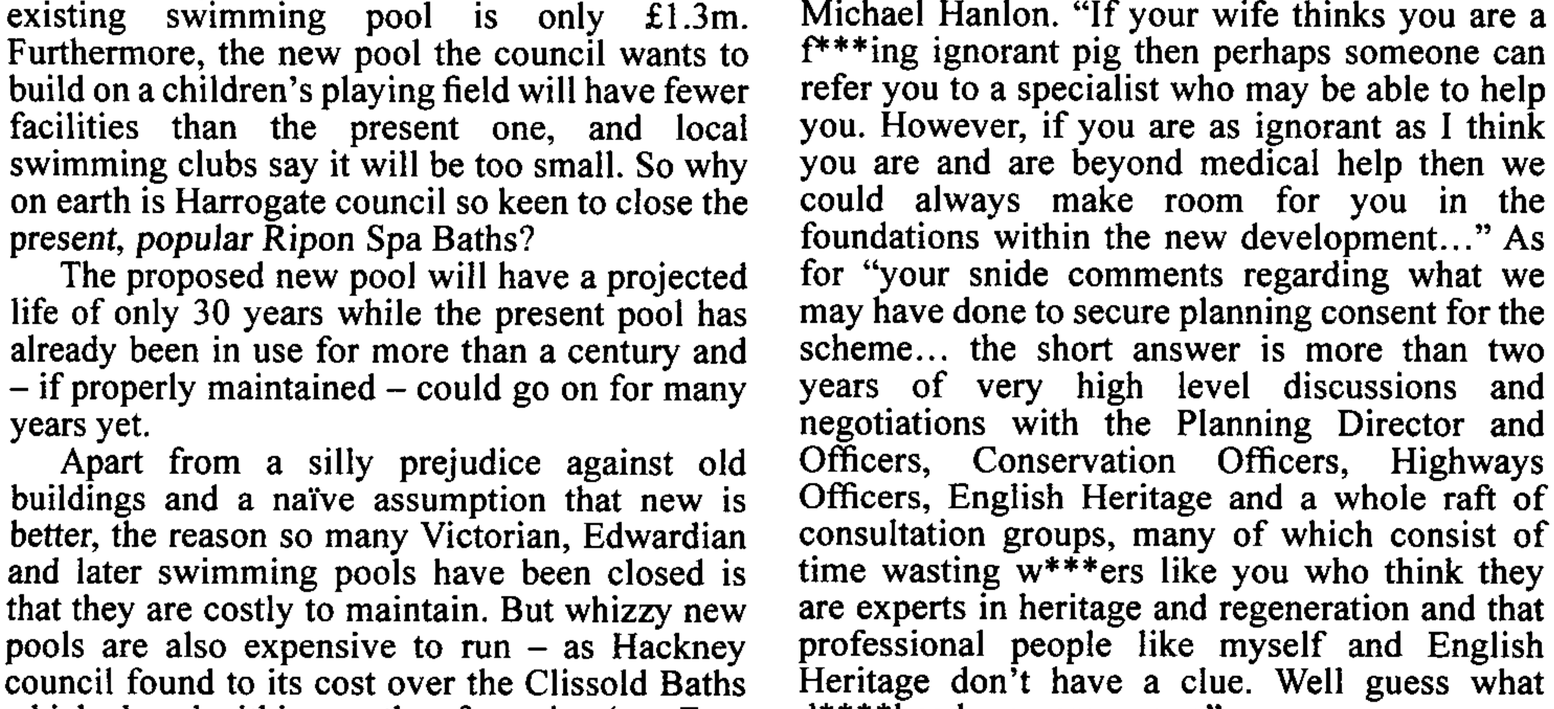
"Are you always so ignorant?" emailed Michael Hanlon. "If your wife thinks you are a f***ing ignorant pig then perhaps someone can refer you to a specialist who may be able to help you. However, if you are as ignorant as I think you are and are beyond medical help then we could always make room for you in the foundations within the new development..." As for "your snide comments regarding what we may have done to secure planning consent for the scheme... the short answer is more than two years of very high level discussions and negotiations with the Planning Director and Officers, Conservation Officers, Highways Officers, English Heritage and a whole raft of consultation groups, many of which consist of time wasting w***ers like you who think they are experts in heritage and regeneration and that professional people like myself and English Heritage don't have a clue. Well guess what d****head, you are wrong".

The late Reichsmarshal Hermann Göring could hardly have put it better.

'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH


China's now the world's hottest art market.
The big money's leaving London for Beijing.
And there's nothing we can do about it!
TAI CHI
TEACH YOURSELF MANDARIN

I-SPY *Frankfurt Airport*

Submitted by Dr Sean Allan.
£10 paid for similar submissions.
(SAE required for return of photographs)

Letters

Private Eye

Lookalike

Ken

Gibbon

Sir,

Could this be Ken Livingstone?

With the grudging compliments of
BARRY HUMPHRIES.

Hold the bus

Sir,

Good to see your mayoral contest commentator has the traditional Eye Public School grasp of science, particularly geometry. The Boris bus because it has a longer wheel base than the front half of a bendy bus does indeed have a bigger turning circle. However as any fule knows, whenever you attach a trailer, which is what the back half of a bendy bus is, to a vehicle it increases the turning circle of the total and therefore the cut in/cyclists killing zone by up to 50% depending on the towing hitch to axle distance and set up. Worryingly this cyclist squashing effect of large vehicles, particularly bendy buses, turning left is set to increase as the DfT in the latest Highway Code now permits cyclists and motorbikes to undertake slow moving traffic on the inside.

What is interesting is that the Lizard King has done his best, quite rightly, to rid London of unnecessary large vehicles; articulated lorries, Mad Mothers in school run Chelsea tractors, etc., yet remains strangely committed to these lumbering juggernauts. Perhaps your ace reporter should be investigating the reason for this rather than demonstrating that a classical education always ignores the Ancient Greek intellectuals who have relevance in the real world, such as Euclid.

BILL DEAN,

Oldham.

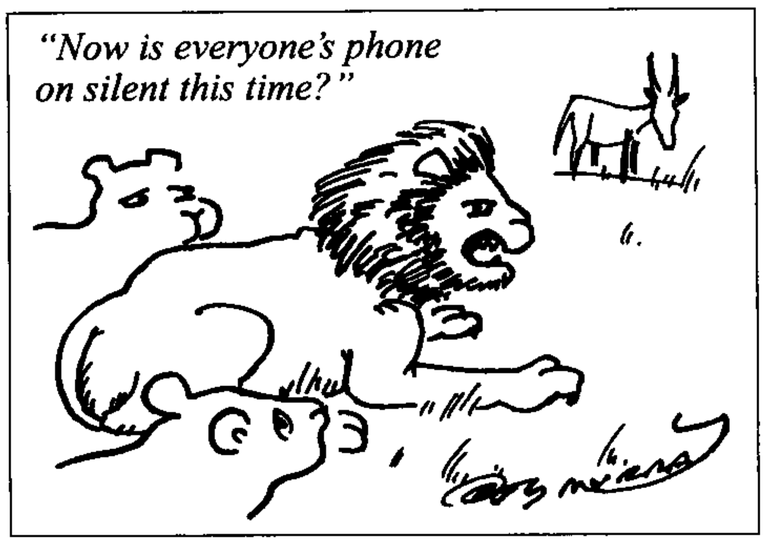
Duff cartoon

Sir,

Are you kidding with that Ken Pyne cartoon about Natasha Kaplinsky? Unbelievable. She's got every right to be pregnant and employed. The Eye is supposed to be satire, not heavy-handed, sexist, myopic, pre-1970s shite. Get a grip. Subscription cancelled etc. etc..

CLAIRE GREEN,

Via email.



Letter from Liverpool

Sir,

Re Nooks & Corners, Eye 1207

Piloti's claim that "English Heritage has at last woken up to what is going on in Liverpool" perhaps says more about him being less than awake on the job than it does about the city. English Heritage has been working very closely with Liverpool City Council since 2001. From March 2002 this has been formalised as the "Historic Environment of Liverpool Project" with a full-time post based in the council's Planning Service – an indication of the seriousness with which we do take conservation.

But, conservation should not be seen as preventing new building and I am not sure why he decries development in our city. British cities are changing driven by national 'urban renaissance' policies. What we are trying to do in Liverpool – with a degree of success – is to preserve our heritage while allowing new developments. The recent Unesco mission was overwhelmingly positive about what is happening in the city and concluded its world heritage site status is not at risk.

Among other things, Piloti also mentions Josephine Butler House. This is neither listed nor within a conservation area. As such there are no planning controls over its demolition. Whatever the actions of the developer, the city council managed to get a listing inspector from English Heritage's York office out to assess the buildings within two working days of their receipt of the request for listing. The architectural assessor stated unequivocally that there was no special architectural or historic interest to justify listing.

Yours faithfully,
NIGEL LEE,

Planning Manager, Regeneration, Liverpool City Council.

Lookalike

Corporal

Governor

Sir,

Dad's Army's Corporal Jones of "Don't panic, Mr Mainwaring" fame bears an uncanny resemblance to Bank of England Governor, Mervyn King of "Don't panic, Darling" fame. Are they perchance related?

Yours,
JANET BURKE,

Via email.

And when police turned up to quell the riot they were pelted with shards of glass before moving on to a nearby town and rampaging through pubs there.

Sunday Express

Gavel Basher bashed

Sir,

I was disappointed to note in 1207 that Gavel Basher has adopted a curiously Daily Mail approach to personal injury litigation.

As a personal injury solicitor, I am of course biased, but also privy to the information that the number of personal injury claims has gone down substantially since the abuses of the claims management companies some years ago.

There is no compensation culture; there are rights enshrined by statute, such as say the Occupiers Liability Act, from the age of compensation madness, er the 50s, or the law of negligence springing from Donoughe v Stevenson in the wishy washy liberal err 30s. People now just know their rights

ROBERT MILLER,

Hale, Cheshire.

Imperfect tense

Sir,

Craig Brown hasn't been paying close enough attention when listening to Melvyn Bragg (Diary, Eye 1207). When describing events that took place in the past Melvyn would never demean himself by using the past tense, yet he is reported as speaking consistently in this tense in your Diary column. He always uses the far more intellectual present tense. Similarly, other people when guests of Melvyn would not consistently use the past tense. Some of them, like Melvyn, never use it at all, while the rest attempt to avoid it but keep lapsing into the vulgar style of speaking of the past in the, er, past tense natural to their inferior intellects. When they do this, either they correct themselves or attempt to steer back into the approved tense with self-conscious clumsiness, as in this typical sentence heard this very week on Radio 4, "What happened was there is a feudal revolution" (Talking of events in the twelfth century).

CHRIS PADLEY,

Lincoln.

NHS queue balls

Sir,

Richard Hook (Letters, Eye 1208) repeats the old lie that private treatment is not NHS queue-jumping; that it supposedly benefits NHS patients.

My wife has a heart condition requiring regular monitoring, but she can rarely get to see the specialist consultant. So we paid to see him privately on one occasion, finding him at a private hospital where he spends much of his time. Queues for NHS treatment would be transformed if all those working in private treatment were transferred to NHS facilities instead.

If you faced a long queue at a shop, but saw that you could pay extra to be dealt with at a special counter that kept a member of staff occupied for that purpose, you would be queue-jumping and ordinary customers would be deprived of a member of staff to speed up their transactions. If you ignore the queue and go straight to the "Privilege" counter, it's still queue-jumping, however you try to wrap it in semantics.

TONY VINICOMBE,

Shoreham, West Sussex.

Bum note

Sir,

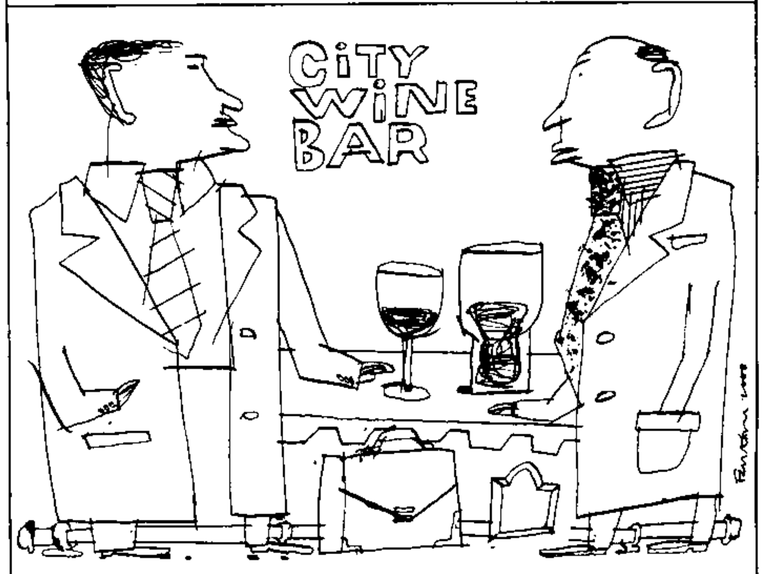
Delighted as I am to be a cartoon in your magazine again ("Be a Freud", p20, Eye 1208), I am a bit disappointed that you have used the same joke (different photo) as you used in 2002 during the Freud Retrospective at Tate Britain. Surely you could have come up with something new and, to be honest, you can't even see my bum...

Looking forward to better joke next time.

Kind regards,
SUE TILLEY,

Via email.

Scenes You Seldom See



"I'm not surprised we've lost our jobs – it's all our fault"

Wings clipped

Sir,

Perhaps I can help set the record straight for the benefit of both Square Basher and "A Flight Lieutenant" (Letters, 1208)? Having flown into RAF Brize Norton from Op TELIC several times during 2007, I can attest that during the arrival briefs given by RAF movements staff, I heard it stated that passengers transferring to either Heathrow or Gatwick for onward civilian flights had to change into civilian clothes, as they would otherwise be refused entry to the terminals by airport security.

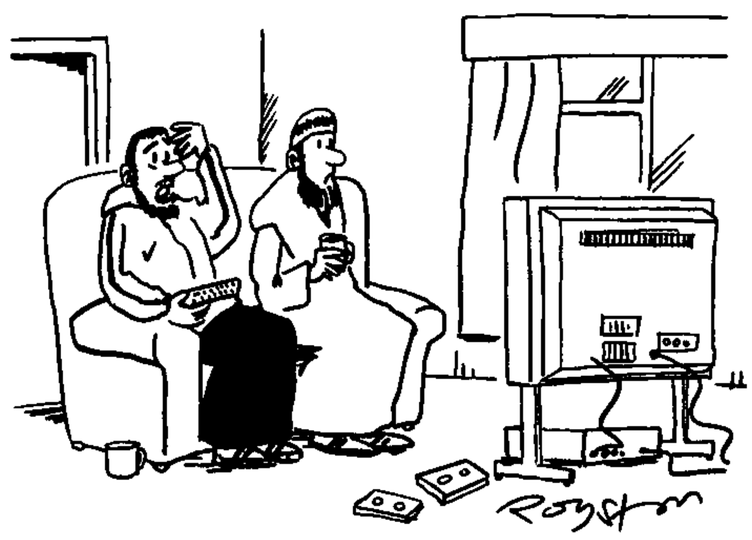
This presented many soldiers coming home with a slight problem, as they had been instructed not to take civilian kit out to Iraq with them (unlike the RAF contingent based alongside in Basrah, troops making up the TELIC 10 manoeuvre brigade were not allowed to wear Mufti while in theatre). The policy can hardly be that of "the returning unit's commander", as all but a few of the main deployment and recovery flights are made up of multi-service personnel from all over the Gulf area, flying out of hubs in Kuwait or Qatar.

On one occasion I queried the NCO who had given the briefing, and he told me that the clothing policy had been imposed after the MOD had received complaints that seeing soldiers in uniform made civilian passengers feel "uncomfortable". A soldier in my unit told me that on landing at Brize for his October R&R, he had been obliged to change at the kerbside before getting onto the transfer coach; he ended up riding to the airport and catching his onward flight home to Glasgow wearing flip-flops, compression shorts and his issue brown undershirt – apparently hypothermic young men do not offend the sensibilities of travelling British holidaymakers.

So Square Basher was right; albeit the changing parade took place on the tarmac on the other side of the Brize arrivals terminal.

ROBIN BROWNE,

Dallas, Texas.



"I don't believe it, man – my mum has taped EastEnders *over my martyrdom video"*

Kidney failure

Sir,

As President of the Renal Association as well as an Eye subscriber for more years than I care to remember I felt I should respond to some of the points raised in the letter from Roger Montague (Eye 1208). Creatinine (not creatine: that's something else) is a protein in the blood that can be used to assess kidney function: it is normally removed by the kidneys so that if the kidneys are not working efficiently the level rises. Intepretation of the "normal" numbers is complicated because it relates to the amount of muscle in the individual's body so that levels tend to be higher in males than females and higher in young people than in older ones. A rise from 127 to 200 in a young man certainly reflects a significant deterioration in kidney function. In Mr Montague's case a rise from 180 to 200 also represents some deterioration but whether this should provoke "alarm bells" would depend upon the timescale of the rise amongst other considerations. It is incorrect to say that there is any difference in the creatinine level that indicates the need for dialysis or for a kidney transplant: both are forms of kidney replacement used when kidney failure reaches critical levels. The level of creatinine at which this is necessary varies considerably between individuals of different age and sex.

Mr Montague also mentions diabetes insipidus: this is nothing to do with diabetes mellitus, the condition in which sugar metabolism is disturbed. The clue is in the names. Diabetes means passing a lot of urine: in mellitus ("sweet-tasting") the urine tastes sweet because it contains excess sugar (yes, physicians did previously taste the urine as part of their clinical assessment of a patient!) whereas in insipidus it is insipid, ie not sweet. Diabetes insipidus (DI) is due to a failure of a hormone called antidiuretic hormone, either not being produced (cranial DI) or not working effectively on the kidneys (nephrogenic DI, as in Mr Montague's case).

Yours sincerely,
PROFESSOR PETER MATHIESON,
The Renal Association, Bristol.

Bhutan blunder?

Sir,

Presumably your correspondent (Letter from Kathmandu, Eye 1208) was not really in Kathmandu, because if he were he would hardly have referred to Nepal's happy "Bhutanese cousins". After all, the ethnic Nepalese in Bhutan, known as Lhotshampas, were partly expelled from the country in a bout of ethnic cleansing at the beginning of the 1990s. Since then 107,000 of them – equivalent to around 15 percent of Bhutan's tiny population – have been going slowly out of their minds in refugee camps in south east Nepal.

There are still Lhotsampas in Bhutan. The most recent census in 2005 defined 82,000 people as 'non-citizens', denied education, freedom of movement and voting rights. There are rumours of fresh persecutions, though these are hard to verify since foreigners are forbidden from travelling to the south of the country where most of these people live.

Yet the outside world continues to believe the myth of a Buddhist Utopia adopting democracy. Notwithstanding Bhutan's recent elections, most of the country's politicians remain leading members of the feudal clans which continue to run the country.

THOMAS BELL,
Via email.

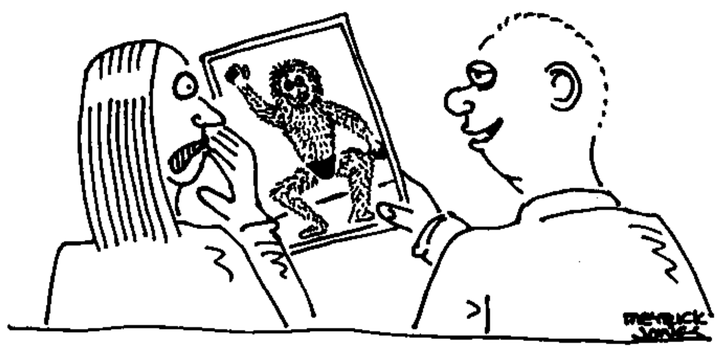
Lost in translation

Sir,

Yer attempt at Ant and Dec's accent in TV Eye (1207) wuz typical of public school southerners wee've nivvor been north of Watford Gap – wherever that is.

Geordies divn't say "laik" or "th'act", in fact nee northerner duz. If yer feel yer must be risible about northern accents, please try to get them reet, otherwise my subscription's ganna gan. Olltornitively, aa'll be yer northern taak export (hoo diz fower poond a yurr soond?).

Yours faithfully,
HARRY SMITH,
West Kirby, Wirral.



"And this is me at Uni. Like all of us, I had a lot more hair in those days..."

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Ken Doherty needs to win the next two frames... a huge probability but highly unlikely."
WILLIE THORNE, World Snooker Championships
(Andy Ward)

"He's second favourite for this frame..."
TERRY GRIFFITHS, World Snooker Championships
(Dr A.D. Portno)

"Chelsea fans will have switched off their televisions and be listening to the radio with their hands over their ears biting their nails."
ALAN GREEN, Radio 5 Live
(Francis R. Fox)

"The players want a slice of what is now a huge, huge gravy train..."
JACK BANNISTER, TalkSport
(Hector Nunns)

"And take care if you are visiting family or relatives."
DEBBY LINLEY (ITV Weather)
(Derrick Scholey)

'Pedants Corner

... Mike Barfield is wrong to say that someone with XXY chromosone is intersexual (Eye 1207). In fact they would be a man with Klinefelter's Syndrome, which is characterised by a lack of testosterone, small testicles, and occasionally the growth of a pair of small breasts. So nothing like me at all then...

DAN WHEELER.

... Ratbiter is wrong to call Belarus "the last dictatorship in Europe" (p7, Eye 1208). As any fule no, even though most of Russia's vast land area is in Asia it also comprises 40% of Europe, in which area are the capital and over 70% of the population, and if Russia is a democracy then I am Lord Gnome's Auntie Nellie.

LAURIE MARKS.

... So Hadrian's Wall is a building then (Letters, Eye 1208)? The clue is there: it's a wall. A building needs a roof.

JOHN RUTHERFORD.

... Aramaic is not a lineal descendant of Hebrew (P'edants Corner, Eye 1208), the latter being in the Canaanite branch of the Northwest Semitic languages, separate to the branch of various Aramaic dialects. Far from being "debased", Aramaic dialects have been media of high literary expression for the better part of three millennia, from usage in the Torah (parts of Ezra and Daniel), as an official language of the Assyrian and Achaemenid empires, usage in the Eastern Roman/Byzantine and Sassanid Empires and Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates, right through to continued usage as liturgical languages in Eastern Christianity today. Also, many first century Palestinians would have been likely to speak Greek instead of or as well as Aramaic.

CLIVE DIXON.

... Reports about Hitler being vegetarian mentioned by Catherine Atherton (Eye 1208) ignores the fact that people used to have a lax and sometimes bizarre definition of the term; even today you'll hear comments like "I'm veggie but I eat fish".

So, Fritz Redlich MD, in his book Hitler: Diagnosis of a Destructive Prophet *says "Hitler's vegatarianism was quite strict... with the exception of an Austrian dish he loved, liver dumpling". Salvatore Paolini, a former waiter to Hitler: "On the whole he never ate meat, but he did like sausages and ham". Dione Lucas, his cook in the late 1930s said his favourite dish was baby pigeon. Another of his chefs, Kannenberg, cooked him sausages and ham in the Berlin bunker. Biographers such as Speer and Payne write of his fondness for sausages and liver. At most, he may have briefly given up meat to help cope with ill health – but only briefly.*

As for Junge's comments about his compassion for animals... well, he can hardly be called a model of rational consistency as he banned vegetarian societies from Germany. The Gestapo would even confiscate vegetarian publications. There are simply too many reported instances of him eating meat for counterclaims to be credible.

STEPHEN BAYLEY.

... Bookworm gives the dates of David Knyaston's Austerity Britain *as 1945-51. Shurely shum mishtake! The dates are 1945-1948. As my old editor once told me, as a cub reporter, get your facts right, otherwise you will put doubt in the reader's mind as to the veracity of other stories. Pip, pip!*

BRIAN GRAHAM.

7.30 Chopin Etudes
A performance of music by the famous French composer. (S)
Radio Times

Letter from **Malabo**

from Our Own Correspondent

AS we survey the post-election debris in Zimbabwe, Kenya and Nigeria, it's comforting to know that here in Equatorial Guinea the traditions laid down by some of the continent's more illustrious former despots still thrive.

We're a small country next to Nigeria, once poor but now oil rich and famous, at least in Britain, for a crazy coup plot four years ago. Not for us second-round run-offs, supreme court rulings or international mediation.

We go to the polls on 4 May with supporters of our president, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, quietly confident of building on a platform of 98 out of 100 seats in the old parliament. The president, according to official results over the years, is even more popular.

The national assembly doesn't do a great deal. If deputies had a rubber stamp, they would probably ask permission before using it. But the circle around the president is taking no chances. As usual in the run-up to an election, the authorities have uncovered yet another coup plot, which for our protection justifies even tighter security than normal.

The suspect again is Severo Moto Nsa, the frog-faced, self-styled president of the government-in-exile in Madrid. A former minister in Obiang's cabinet, he fell out with the president in 1981 and fled. He already faces more than 160 years in jail after being convicted *in absentia* for his role in two earlier conspiracies uncovered by our intelligence boys.

In March one of his associates in Spain was arrested after three weapons were found in a car he was trying to ship to Equatorial Guinea. Seven members of his party were arrested in Malabo and more guns were apparently found at the home of Saturnino Ncogo Mbomio. He was so ashamed of his treachery he committed suicide that very night, according to the government – by the conventional method of repeatedly throwing himself off his prison bunk until he fractured his skull on the concrete floor. Moto, who was arrested in Spain in April, insists he has been framed by a government still smarting over a supreme court ruling restoring his refugee status.

It was perhaps fears of such a self-destructive bout of guilt that prompted our most celebrated inmate, British mercenary Simon Mann, to confess his role so publicly in the now famous bungled 2004 conspiracy. He was anxious to confirm that the plot was to bring Moto to power and to name his backers.

Mann was controversially extradited from Zimbabwe on 31 January. Henry Page, Equatorial Guinea's highly paid lawyer, promised a speedy trial, while the attorney general waived the death penalty. But the wheels of justice grind slowly. Ponciano Mbomio Nvo, Mann's lawyer, said this month he had still to be allowed access to his client or review the case file. Not that such details matter. Courts in three continents, including two in Britain, say the evidence Equatorial Guinea presents, and widely accepted as fact in the media, is worthless. But it is more likely to snow in Equatorial Guinea than for judges to go against the will of the president.

Mann's mission was doomed from the start. Some of his most trusted advisers and contacts had long since been on the spooks' payroll in Equatorial Guinea and South Africa, where the plot was put together. But we need people like Mann and the hapless Moto. We have so much money from oil sloshing around we hardly know what to do with it. This month we bought back stakes in some of our own oil concessions for more than $2bn, a sum widely regard in the industry as hugely over-priced. If our leaders really thought there was no one outside plotting to take it all away, they might fall out among themselves.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "A waiter's work requires him to move swiftly and remain active for long periods," Kemal Koç of the Komsu restaurant told reporters in the Nisantasi quarter of Istanbul, "and because of this, sweat is our biggest problem. I don't like bad smells in my restaurant, so I have always insisted that my staff shower twice a day and use anti-stinks like deodorants, but even so they were still emitting unpleasant body stinks in warm weather, and customers were complaining about their smells. Then I read about botox in a magazine, and how its real purpose is to prevent sweating, so I ordered all my service staff to have botox injections in their armpits. It worked, and now my restaurant is free of stink, except the delicious fragrance of kebabs and onions."

Husnu Ondul of the Turkish Human Rights Association has lodged a formal protest about the situation, saying that "employees should not be forced to consent to botox injections. Working conditions should not offend against human honour or dignity, and workers should be able to smell the way they choose." However, Koç was unrepentant, noting that "Before I gave my order, I took high dermatological advice, and was told that botox simply blocks sweat holes in a certain area, and does not cause pain or allergic reactions. Anyway, my staff know that the armpit injections are not compulsory. They could always quit their jobs instead." *(Tourism Monthly [Cyprus], December 2007 and Turkish Daily News, 9/11/07. Spotter: John Russell)*

– ● –

● Le Petit Singly – L'authentique fromage au lait maternel de femme.

Founded in 1947, the fromagerie Cosma is situated in the traditional and beautiful Ardennes countryside. Le Petit Singly is the only recognised cheese made from mother's milk, but has long been overshadowed by speciality cheesemakers working with milk from cows, goats, or ewes. The benefits and virtues of cheese made from mother's milk were first discovered in the nineteenth century. This ancient recipe is anchored in village traditions, and has proved time and again its regenerative effects on the body. Produced in small quantities and totally by hand, le Petit Singly is a rare product, but rich in vitamins: the human maternal milk from which it is made is said to contain all the nutriments essential to the metabolism of both young and old.

It is for these reasons that the fromagerie Cosma has decided to revive production of this traditional characteristic cheese, and to offer it to gastronomes in search of new tastes.

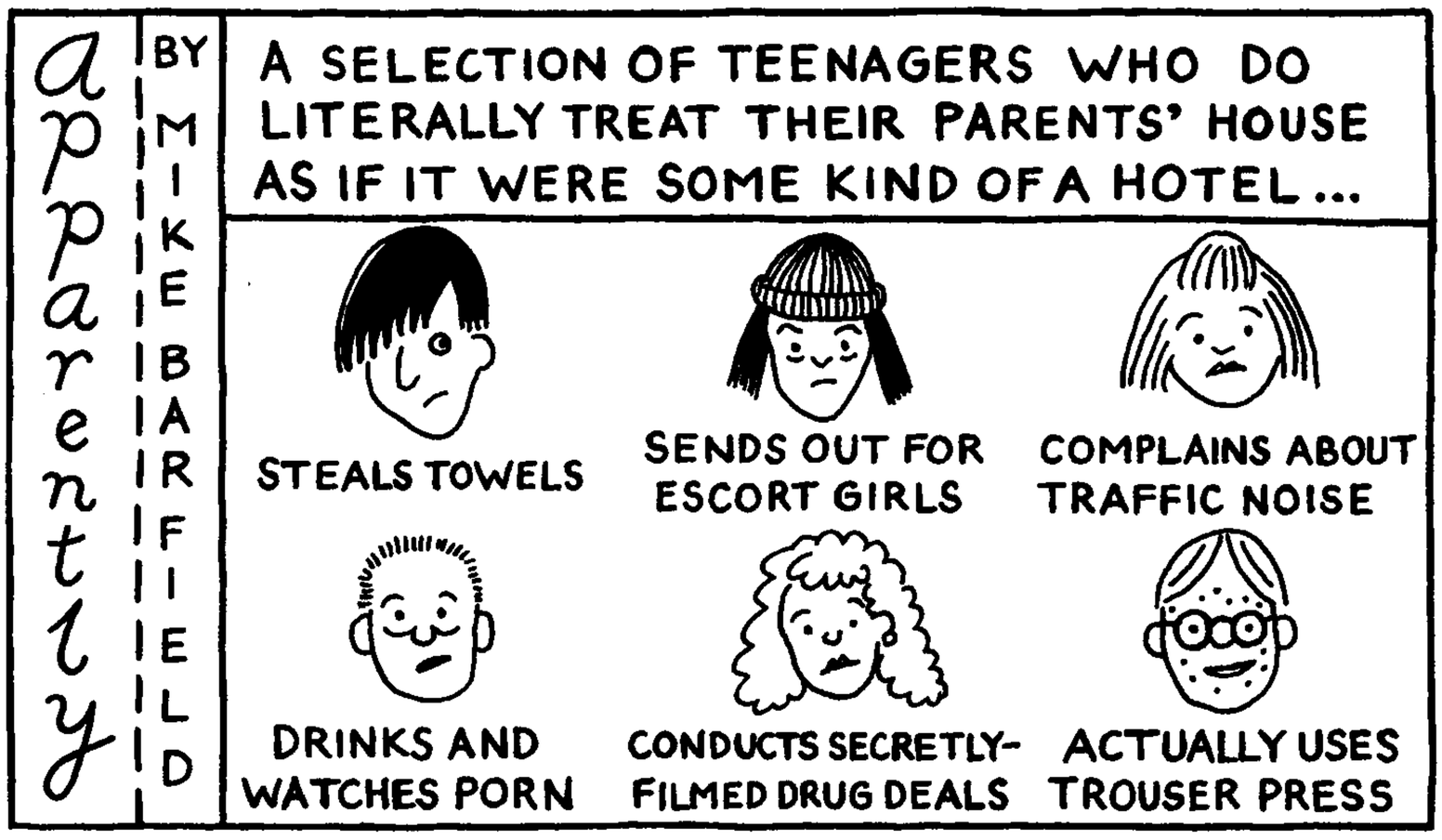
Le Petit Singly is available in different degrees of maturity: jeune – *ideal on its own or in salads;* entre deux âges – *at the end of a meal, with a*

good wine; affiné – *for connoisseurs, sur le pouce;* coulant – *grilled on toast or in fondu; Le Petit Singly familial: 500g. 15 Euros (plus postage); Le Petit Singly individuel: 250g. 10 Euros (plus postage).* (Le Petit Singly website. Spotter: Peter Owen)

– ● –

● "I never imagined I would end up taking ballet lessons," Police officer Ciprian Lascu told reporters in Timisoara, "but here I am, performing pliés, pirouettes, and arabesques in the middle of the rush-hour traffic. We thought our chief was joking when he first suggested ballet to help us manage the flow of cars with more grace, and reduce road rage amongst motorists, but it really works. I think we still need more lessons, but we're learning quickly, and already look far more elegant and efficient when we're out directing traffic."

Commenting on the initial success of the scheme, Dorel Cojan (Timisoara's chief of police) noted that "the aim is to help officers achieve more elegance in their movements while regulating traffic. The result is not only pleasing to the eye, but also helps drivers who are stressed while waiting at the red lights. Our officers wear their uniforms for lessons, rather than stretchy dance tights, because that's what they have to wear in the street. So far they've mainly been dancing to the works of Tchaikovsky, because Swan Lake seems to provide the best role model for traffic police." *(Dawn [Pakistan], 29/2/08. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)*


apparently
BY MIKE BARFIELD
A SELECTION OF TEENAGERS WHO DO LITERALLY TREAT THEIR PARENTS' HOUSE AS IF IT WERE SOME KIND OF A HOTEL...
STEALS TOWELS
SENDS OUT FOR ESCORT GIRLS
COMPLAINS ABOUT TRAFFIC NOISE
DRINKS AND WATCHES PORN
CONDUCTS SECRETLY-FILMED DRUG DEALS
ACTUALLY USES TROUSER PRESS

PRIME MINISTERIAL DECREE NO. 19

From the Desk of the Supreme Leader

"The Leader's Not For Turning"

Comrades!

Let me begin by clarifying the events of recent days, in case anyone has failed to appreciate their significance.

As you well know, my concern has always been the eradication of poverty, which I achieved every year that I was Chancellor, despite the attempts made to sabotage my efforts by the discredited former leader, who constantly sought to siphon off public money to his rich capitalist friends.

When last year I proposed a new tax system for the benefit of the British proletariat, it was always my intention that any additional tax that they paid would be given back to them.

In this way, despite paying more tax, they would end up better off than ever before.

This brilliant scheme was nevertheless wilfully misrepresented by Comrade Field, an embittered and cynical former member of the Politburo and friend of the hated former leader, who circulated rumours among gullible Party apparatchiks that I, the Supreme Leader, was in some way trying to take money from the pockets of the poor in order to redistribute it to the rich.

This vile, anti-Socialist calumny was allowed to fester in the warped minds of those Comrades who are still hankering after the ideological false turnings promoted by the doctrines of the Mandelsonian-Campbellite revisionist claque.

A pathetic attempted putsch was then mounted by ex-Comrade Field and a handful of some 100 of his fellow opportunist neo-Blairite renegades, urged on by the reactionary *Dacreist*-Murdochite press.

Having discovered this plot, by reading the Daily Mail, I took firm action at once by rounding up all the insurrectionists in the dimmer recesses of the Soviet and giving them an ultimatum – that if they did not back down, I would give in to all their demands.

Comrades, you should have seen their faces, as they cowered triumphantly in the face of my principled and uncompromising show of leadership!

Oh yes!, as that great Socialist revolutionary reformer John Major used to say in the days when he was constantly putting down rebellions by UKip-ite-Bastardist factions within his party.

But enough of ancient history. The whole rationale of the Age of Change is to move on, and to draw a line under the past, as Comrade Major also used to put it.

Suffice it to say that, entirely on my own initiative, I agreed to go ahead with my original plan but to modify it, in such a way that all the money taken away from the poor would be returned to them, after they have filled in the necessary and simple 320-page form evaluating their tax-credit-worthiness.

In less than two years, I pledge that many of them will have received an official acknowledgement that their forms are being processed by the Bureau of Benefit Suitability Assessment with a view to meeting the targets for Form Fulfilment Delivery.

And let no one say that I am concerned only with poverty among the poor. As you know, I have recently had representations from some of the most valued members of our wealth community, namely our hard-pressed senior bank workers.

Through circumstances beyond their control, these honest toilers in the boardroom, at the sharp end of the economic coal face, selflessly lending money to all who ask for it, find themselves desperately short of all the money they have lost.

I have therefore followed their example in freely handing out £50 billion in the form of a loan which does not have to be paid back.

This will enable some of the most needy and downtrodden elements in our society to continue eating the sort of lunch to which they are rightly entitled.

I very much doubt whether Comrade Field will be hurrying to applaud this truly Socialist gesture of solidarity with our debt-creating classes!

Signed,

Gordon Brown

The Supreme Leader

ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE NO. 94

Comrade Lord Levy

This toadying lickspittle of the former leader has sought to add to his already vast pile of ill-gotten gains by publishing a book full of lies.

The hated ex-Comrade Blair has told his reviled Zionist apparatchik that I the Supreme Leader am bound to lose the election. Well, Comrade Blair would know, having lost three general elections! And he calls me a liar!

Ex-Comrade Lord Levy is forthwith a non-person and any Comrade found reading his book will be sent for re-education to the Gulag Academy. **G.B.**

LONDON SOVIET ELECTIONS

Comrade Leninspart has kindly told me that there is no need for me to help him with his campaign by appearing in London or sending him any messages of support. He realises that I am terribly busy with other matters and I am most grateful for his comradely gesture. **G.B.**

HERO OF THE PEOPLE NO. 94

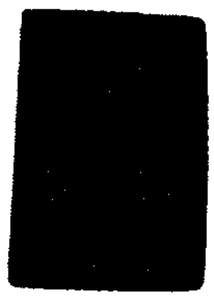
Comrade Lord Levy

We salute Comrade Lord Levy who in his revealing memoir exposes the corrupt and vicious regime of the loathed former leader who is revealed as nothing less than a money-grubbing, opportunist, egocentric, vain, massage-loving, decadent, fat capitalist running dog. And his wife, the infamous Madame Blair, is shown enthralled to the evil masseuse Carol Rasputin and the depraved scheming Count Mandelson who spread lies that I, the Supreme Leader, shared his unnatural proclivities!

I recommend all Comrades to read this excellent book at once. **G.B.**

"In the Age of Change it is important to change one's mind"

Taken from the Chapter "The Imperatives of Pragmatic U-turnism In The Pursuit of Ideological Purity



GLENDA SLAGG

FLEET STREET'S CHEEKIEST GIRL!? (GEDDIT?)

■ **FOR GOD'S sake lay off Amy, Mister Pressman!?! Winehouse, I'm talkin' about, stoopid!!? Can't you see this gal's got troubles bigtime!?! With hubby in clink and being hooked on everything – especially trouble!?! – she needs some TLC, and not the media a-snappin' and a-pappin' every time she falls over in the gutter!!?!**

■ AREN'TCHASICKOFHER?! Amy Winehouse, I'm talkin' about, stoopid!?! OK, so she's won every award under the sun but the only award she'd get from me is Junkhead of the Year!?! And I don't give those out too often!!?! Take a tip from Auntie Glenda, Amy – top yourself before it's too late!!?!

■ **IT HURTS me to say this, but isn't it time Kate and Gerry McCann moved on?! We feel for them bigtime, but there has to come a time when we say enough is enough and try and get on with the rest of our lives. Sorry, Kate and Gerry, but sometimes someone has to say these things!?**

■ IT'S EXACTLY a year since little Maddie disappeared. So what? It could be a hundred years but we should still keep looking. Hats off to Kate and Gerry for keeping their campaign alive. I for one will be wearing my yellow ribbon for *as long as it takes!?!*

■ HERE THEY ARE – Glenda's Maypole Munchkins!?!

● **Avram Grant.** Chelsea's Mr Grumpy! I'll put a smile on your face, Big Boy!?!

● Er... that's it!?!

Byeee!

THOSE NEW SIMPLIFIED RAIL FARES IN FULL

First-Class Single Journey £24.50
The Blair Supersaver* £00.00

* To qualify for this fare the ticket holder must be a former prime minister travelling without any money.

Gnomington Opera

Il Ritorno di Berlusconi

(or The Robber Baron Returns)

by Guiseppe de Birtwistle

THE HIGHLIGHT of the Gnomington Summer season will be the premiere of this little-known Italian masterpiece, based on an Italian folk tale.

The robber baron, Silvio, returns from two years' exile, after the kingdom has been usurped by another robber baron, Roman di Prodi.

The chorus of villagers sing despairingly 'Mama Mia', as the hated and corrupt tyrant steals back the throne.

Another highlight is the 'Alitalia Chorus', to celebrate the villain's seizure of the State airline.

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam
Humphrey Lyttleton,
Jazz Trumpeter and
Radio Personality

So. Farewell
Then.
Humphrey
Lyttleton.

Popularly known
As Humph.

I'm sorry I
Haven't a clue
What to say

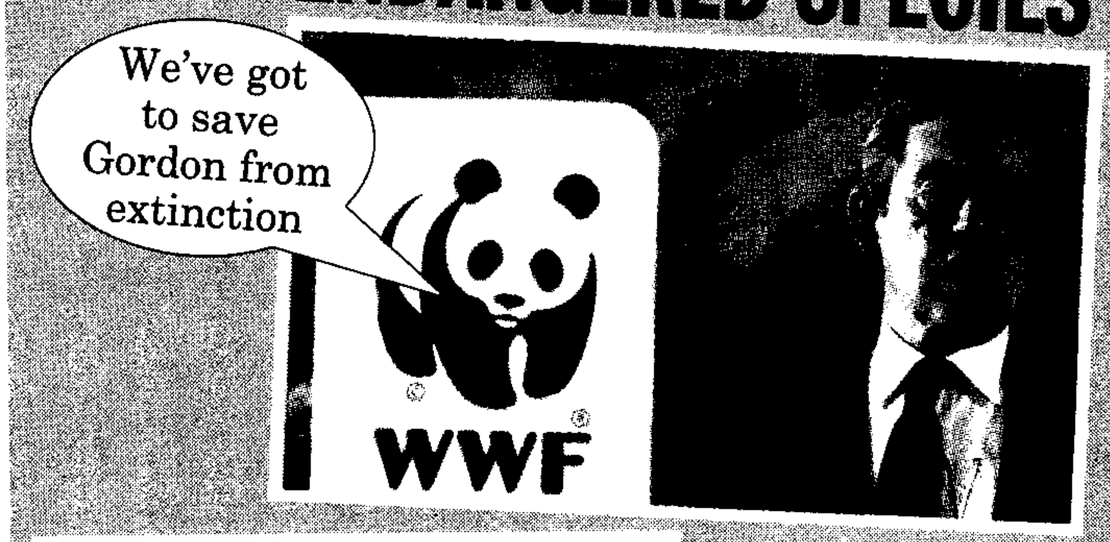
Except that
Now you
Have heard the
Last Trump.

E.J. Thribb (17½
Mornington Crescent)

THE WEEK IN PICTURES

MAESTRO BUSH CONDUCTS

ENDANGERED SPECIES



BORIS POLICY SHOCK

Wedding of the Century

How They Are Related

Cheeky Girl

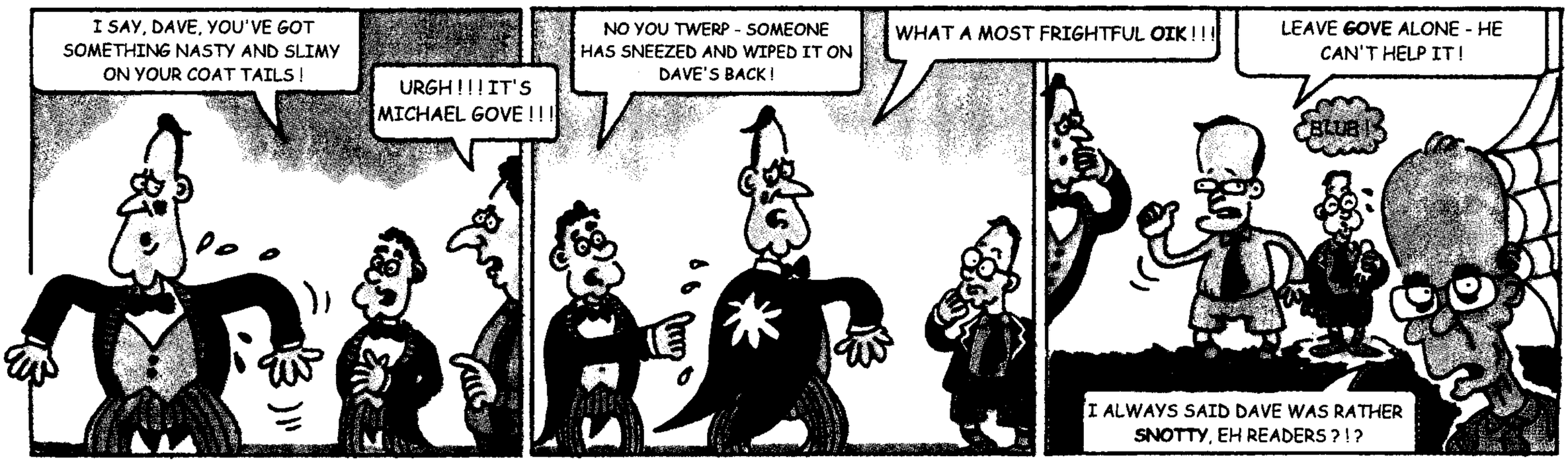
Vlad the Cheeky
|
Cheeky The Vampire Slayer
|
Count Dracula
|
Michael Howard
|
"Touch My Bram" Stoker
|
Bum Stroker

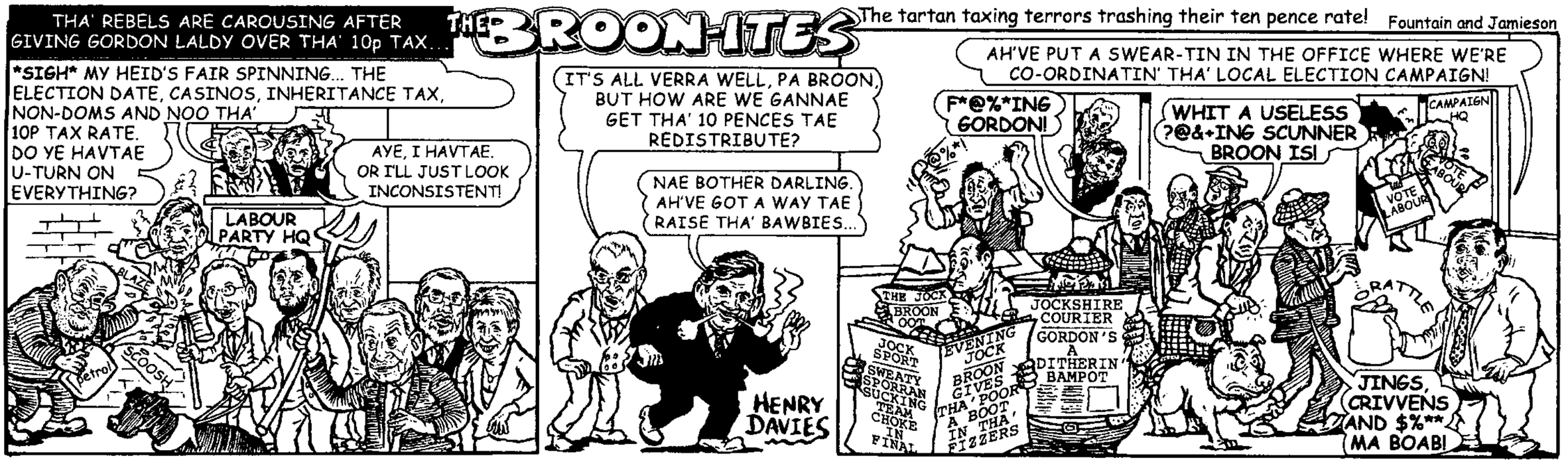
Gabriella Vampirimia
|
Lembit Ofallright

Opik

Sesame Street-Porter
|
Opik Sesame
|
Lemsip Opec
|
Limpet Harpic
|
Legover Toothpic
|
Libdem Opeless
|
Lembit O'Booze
|
Count Drinkula

Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS


I SAY, DAVE, YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING NASTY AND SLIMY ON YOUR COAT TAILS!
URGH!!! IT'S MICHAEL GOVE!!!
NO YOU TWERP - SOMEONE HAS SNEEZED AND WIPED IT ON DAVE'S BACK!
WHAT A MOST FRIGHTFUL OIK!!!
LEAVE GOVE ALONE - HE CAN'T HELP IT!
BLUB!
I ALWAYS SAID DAVE WAS RATHER SNOTTY, EH READERS?!?


THA' REBELS ARE CAROUSING AFTER GIVING GORDON LALDY OVER THA' 10p TAX...
THE BROON-ITES
The tartan taxing terrors trashing their ten pence rate!
Fountain and Jamieson
SIGH MY HEID'S FAIR SPINNING... THE ELECTION DATE, CASINOS, INHERITANCE TAX, NON-DOMS AND NOO THA' 10P TAX RATE. DO YE HAVTAE U-TURN ON EVERYTHING?
AYE, I HAVTAE. OR I'LL JUST LOOK INCONSISTENT!
LABOUR PARTY HQ
BLAIR
MANDY
SCOOSH
petrol
IT'S ALL VERRA WELL, PA BROON, BUT HOW ARE WE GANNAE GET THA' 10 PENCES TAE REDISTRIBUTE?
NAE BOTHER DARLING. AH'VE GOT A WAY TAE RAISE THA' BAWBIES...
HENRY DAVIES
AH'VE PUT A SWEAR-TIN IN THE OFFICE WHERE WE'RE CO-ORDINATIN' THA' LOCAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN!
F*@%*ING GORDON!
WHIT A USELESS ?@&+ING SCUNNER BROON IS!
CAMPAIGN HQ
VOTE LABOUR
THE JOCK BROON OOT
JOCK SPORT SWEATY SPORRAN SUCKING TEAM CHOKE IN FINAL
EVENING JOCK
BROON GIVES THA' POOR A BOOT IN THA' FIZZERS
JOCKSHIRE COURIER
GORDON'S A DITHERIN' BAMPOT
RATTLE
JINGS, CRIVVENS AND $%** MA BOAB!

NOT THE CLINTSTONES - THE PREHISTORIC FIRST FAMILY

I ♥ BEER BOWLING GOD & GUNS
Honey, will you say anything to be popular?
I dunno. What would people like me to answer?
The race is brass neck and neck!
You've got to convince ordinary people you've got no class... I mean...
YABBADABBADOUGHNUTSALLROUND!

Celeb

LIGGER

WRITING OUT A CHEQUE, DAD?
LIKE A LOT OF CELEBRITIES I LIKE TO GIVE TO CHARITY. IT MAKES ME FEEL GOOD...
EVERY YEAR I DONATE ONE DAY'S PAY TO THE WORTHWHILE CAUSE OF MY CHOICE.
THAT'S REALLY GENEROUS.
WELL SON, IT SHOWS WHAT SORT OF MAN I AM. WHAT I'M MADE OF AS A GEEZER.
MONEY! AND LOTS OF IT!
BLIMEY O'RILEY...
GET MY P.R. TO LEAK IT DISCREETLY.

Letters and emails

Overcrowding at the British Library

As Britain's foremost historian, I wish to protest in the strongest possible terms at the recent very marked deterioration in the conditions afforded by the Reading Room of the British Library.

Serious scholars such as myself and my good friend Claire Tumbelin have hitherto been accustomed to enjoying the Library's facilities on our own, as we pursue the researches necessary to produce our highly prestigious and best-selling books, such as *Henry VIII – His Raunchy Majesty*, *Mary Queen Of Scots – The Secret Love Romps Of A Right Royal Tart* and *Charles Dickens – Was He Gay?*

Now, however, the scholarly air of erudite tranquility so vital to our academic studies has been shattered by the influx of a mass of "students" – ghastly, poor, young people who claim to be working for their "exams" and who have never written a book in their lives.

Would you believe it, I had to queue for over five minutes the other day before I could leave my fur coat and hat with the little man at the desk? When I eventually found somewhere to sit, I had to wait for ever for another little man to bring me all the books I had asked for, so that I could copy them out.

All the time I was having to endure the sight and smell of these awful young people, who clearly only come into the Library in order to meet each other and have sex.

I remain, yours unfaithfully,
Lady Amnesia Pinter
c/o Cutt & Paste,
Literary Agents, Piccadilly.

Edexcel

GCSE POLITICS (Paper 1)

1) If School A has 15 teachers on strike for one day and School B has 12 teachers on strike for one day, how many parents of pupils taking their GCSEs and scoring C-grades or below will blame the strike, even though they've had months to revise?

ANSWER: All of them.

"Morning, I'm the new maths teacher. What's 2% of £15,000?"

LATE SCHOOL NEWS

THE GOVERNMENT says it will crack down hard on truancy in schools after it was revealed that 10,000 teachers bunked off school last week.

"We cannot let delinquents like this run wild on our streets creating picket lines and demanding a living wage," said a government *(cont. p94)*.

THE NEW DWORKIN BEE

Friday 2 May, 2008

BORICK DEFENDS HIS 'PREACHER OF HATE'

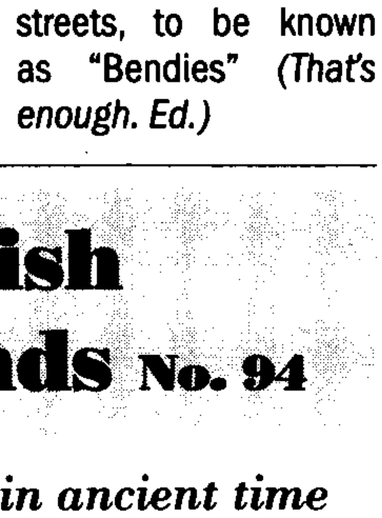
by Our Man At The London Primaries **Michael Whitehouse**

THE CHARISMATIC front-runner in the battle for the London Mayoralty, Turkish-born Borick Obarmy, has run into trouble over his links to a notorious racist evangelist, the Rev. Taki Takalotofcokupthenos, who preaches a weekly sermon of hate in the Spectator magazine, formerly edited by Obarmy.

Today Obarmy tried to distance himself from his former friend and guru, saying, "You don't have to agree with everything your friends say. I am sure when Taki describes all black people as "stupid, lazy coons", that he was just having a harmless little joke, and anyway I was on holiday that week."

Obarmy's opponent Ken Clivingston was quick to seize on Borick's embarrassment, saying, "This is proof that Borick is Jewish and should be sent to a concentration camp."

Meanwhile the third candidate in the battle stayed out of the racist mud-slinging, by promising a fleet of gay-only buses for London's streets, to be known as "Bendies" *(That's enough. Ed.)*



Great British Folk Legends No. 94

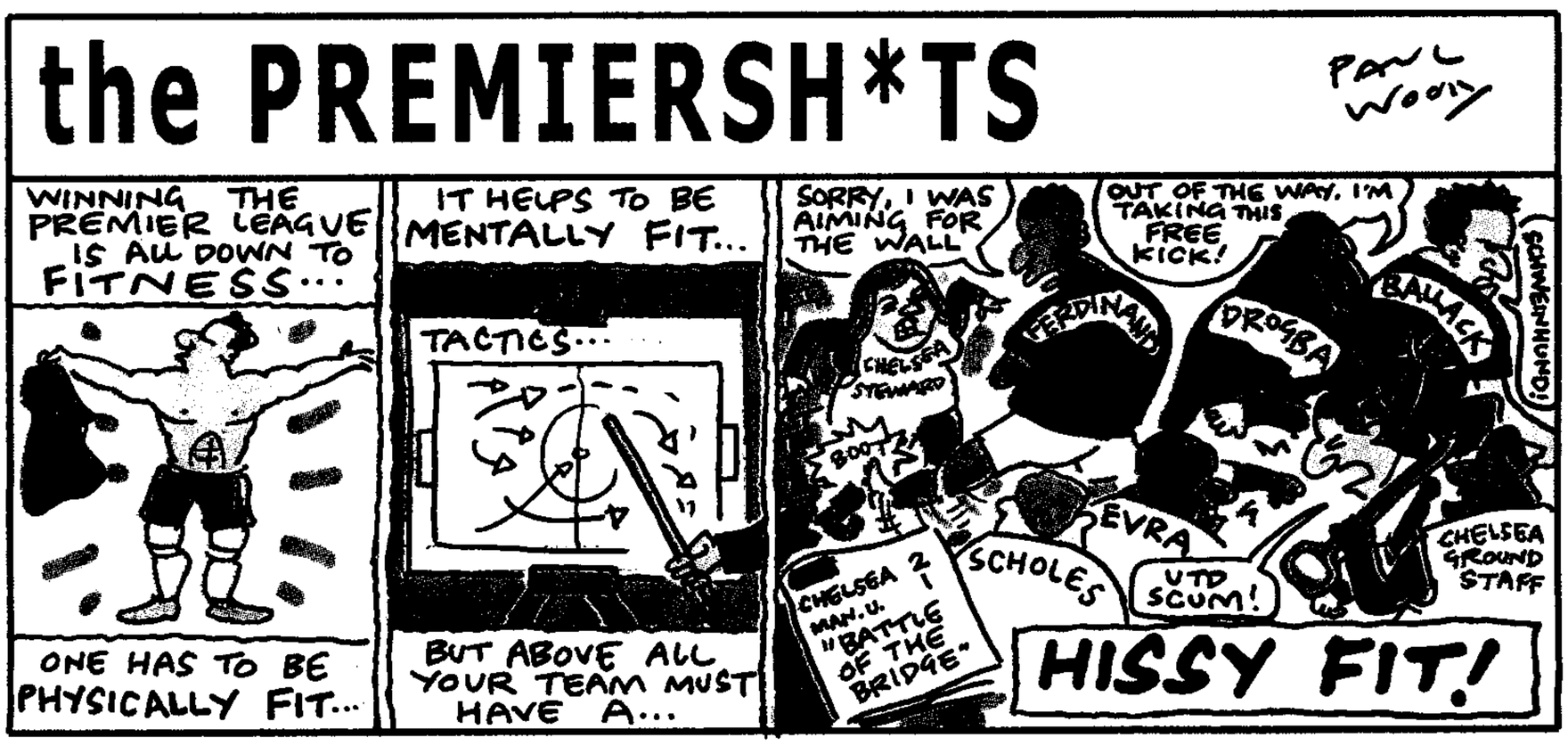
"And did those blue suede shoes in ancient time Walk upon England's green and pleasant land?"

BLAKE's famous poem refers to the legend that Elvis, known to his millions of followers worldwide as "the King", made a secret visit to England in 1958 while at the height of his fame.

The story goes that one of his disciples, St Thomas of Steele, invited Elvis to Britain and showed him the legendary streets of Soho.

Elvis is said to have told his apostle, "I am the jailhouse rock on which you will build your career".

Many years later, Peter Blake painted his famous picture of Elvis's Entry Into Jerusalem, still sung to this day even though no one knows whether the legend is true or not.



FILM PICK

Forgetting Russell Brand 18

Everyone in the world goes on vacation in order to escape Russell Brand – however, it soon transpires that the hirsute celebrity is everywhere and that there is no escape.

EYE RATING:
Z-z-z-z List

WORLD FOOD SHORTAGE

'I AM TO BLAME'

admits Prescott

by Our World Food Crisis Staff
Geoffrey and Patience Wheatcrop

AS ALARM spread across the globe at the disappearance of a wide range of basic foodstuffs, Britain's former deputy prime minister John Prescott has confessed to eating all of it.

Said Prescott, "During my years in office, I was under considerable stress, which meant that I had to eat China's entire rice crop in a single morning, followed by Canada's wheat surplus in the afternoon and Italy's pasta mountain for supper."

"I had no control over my appetites," the amateur croquet-champion and luxury car enthusiast explained. "Every time there was a crisis, I had to stuff my face with the entire maize-crop of Africa. Now I see millions starving

in the Third World, I feel nothing but shame."

The revelations about the cause of the current global food crisis appear in his forthcoming memoirs, Prez A Manger. They were inserted by ghost-writer Oonter Davies, at the request of the publishers, who thought the book was "very boring, particularily since he refused to write about shagging his secretary."

PRESCOTT – DRAMATIC REVELATION LATEST

The former deputy Prime Minister John Prescott has revealed in his new autobiography that he suffered in silence for ten years from Bullymania.

"I believe that Bullymania is rife in Westminster, but most MPs are too embarrassed to talk publicly about the condition," said the big fat man balling his fists.

"I used to indulge in bullying and then purge myself by punching a member of the public."

Another Bullymania sufferer from the Prescott era, Alastair Campbell, says many members of the current cabinet, such as Gordon Brown and Ed Balls, show all the signs of being secret Bullymaniacs too *(cont. p. 94).*

From The Message Boards

Members of the online community respond to the major issues of the day...

Wheelie Bin Man Fined £225

Wish I coud fined all that money in my bin! I woud be WHEELIE chuffed! lol! – ***Danny_Daz***

Controversial Padded Bra For Seven-year-olds

Put the TIT who invented it in a PADDED cell! ☺ –***Thrupenny_Bit***

Burn this bra! – ***Feminist_fatale***

Makes girl's look older so may-be puts the paedo's off? – ***Save_Our_Kids***

MCC 'Positive' About Pink Cricket Ball

The boffins assure us that this florescent pink monstrosity has 'performed well' in tests. But did they ever stop to consider the actual conditions in which it will be used? Had they bothered to go to Lord's, they would have noticed that their fancy new ball is a similar colour to the MCC tie. This shade is also worn by Old Carthusians, Old Wykehamists and Old Marlburians, to name but a few. On a hot day, after intensive refuelling, most of these gentlemen have facial complexions to match. The collective effect, coupled with this dazzling new ball, will baffle even the most eagle-eyed batsman. Half the ground will have to be blocked by sightscreens and Hoggard will need a pot of whitewash on his cheeks! – ***Father_Time***

Painstaking Progress In Jersey Care Home Investigation

not bein funny but ther aint nuffin happen-ing, evry day its all-ways the same just stuff about wall's and cellar's? – ***Dwayne***

wat r u sayin? i never seen u on this thred b4 and I been on it EVRY DAY SINSE 26 FEBURY – ***Justice_4_Maddie***

Dwayne, ignore "Justice 4 Maddie". He is a well-known WUM. :' I agree this is getting boring. I'll stick to the Maddie threads until something happens – ***Rot_in_hell_Myra***

Which one, Rot_in_hell? – ***Jersey-potato***

The Sun Online's Maddie discussion section and a couple of others 😭 – ***Rot_in_hell_Myra***

I bin on all the Maddie threds evry day sinse may last year! Wear were u bak then Myra?????? – ***Justice_4_Maddie***

Don't you EVER call me by that murdering cow's name! You are DEAD if I see you!!!!! – ***Rot_in_hell_Myra***

I'm new to this one – who is Maddie? – ***Father_Time***

POLICE LOG

Neasden Central Police Station

0800 hrs All officers to attend an emergency training course on methods to be employed in the detection and prevention of illegal acts of bowling on unauthorised greens by senior citizens. Officers were instructed in restraining techniques necessary to deal with this menace, including use of riot gear, tear gas, water cannons and the deployment of 50,000-volt laser guns, to break up and disperse dangerous concentrations of elderly bowls-related offenders on recreation areas not enjoying designated status from the relevant local authority.

1300 hrs Undercover wheelie squad (PCs Dagenham and Redbridge) report back from a major surveillance operation in Asda Crescent. After six weeks disguised as a hedge and a pillar box, the two officers managed to secure video footage of 93-year-old Irene Blenkinsop leaving her wheelie-bin open by four centimetres, in criminal contravention of the Refuse Container Closure Regulations 2007. An armed response unit was sent to apprehend the suspect and to detain her for 42 days, using powers provided under the Anti-Terrorism (Freedom of Detention) Act 2006. The suspect proved unco-operative, blaming the council for not emptying her wheelie-bin on a sufficiently regular basis, thus allegedly making it impossible for the bin lid to be fully closed in accordance with the regulations. This statement by the accused added the charge of malicious slander against Neasden Borough Council to the fast-growing list of offences, which included resisting arrest, abuse of a police officer in the course of his duty and high treason. When officers were forced to attach Mrs Blenkinsop's wheelchair to the squad car, in order for her to accompany them back to the station, the suspect became dislodged from her chair when it was being towed at 99mph and was propelled into the path of a 66-tonne Eastern European juggernaut delivering a cargo of immigrants from Somalia. Mrs Blenkinsop thus underwent a terminal experience, and her next of kin were informed that they would have to stand trial in her place.

"I do find new-no-money so terribly vulgar!..."

TERMINAL 5 BOSS DEPARTURE DELAYED

Going nowhere

by Our Aviation Staff **Michael Heathrow**

BRITISH Airways last night announced an indefinite delay to the departure of Chief Executive Willie Walsh.

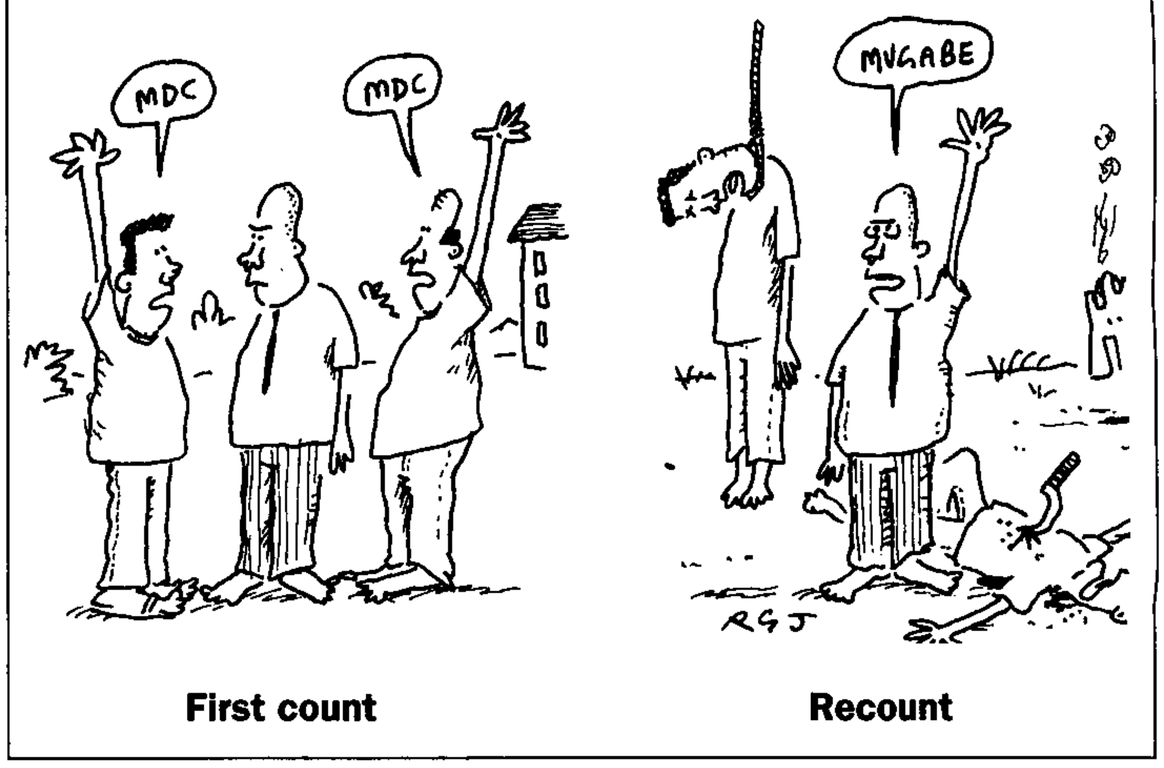
Said an apologetic BA spokesman, "We regret to announce that Mr Willie Walsh, who should have left weeks ago, has not taken off as everyone hoped. We have no confirmed time as yet for his flight and we are sorry for any inconvenience to passengers who are justifiably angry at this set-back."

The Plane Stops Here

It is believed that the problem with Willie Walsh is a technical one.

Said the spokesman, "He has been told to pack his bags. But he has lost them."

That Zimbabwe Vote



First count — Recount

Advertisement

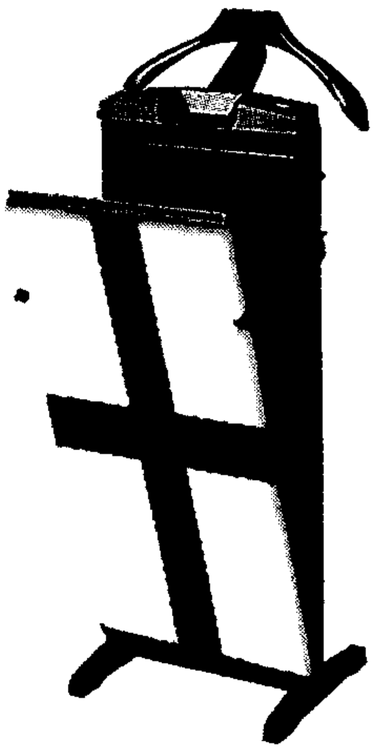
NEW FROM GNOME

CELEBRATE England's patron saint's day by purchasing this special edition of one of England's proudest inventions!

The St George Trouser Press is an iconic symbol of all that is finest in our island history – the White Cliffs of Dover, the Red Telephone Box, the Black London Taxi and, of course, the World-Famous Trouser Press!

With this special Saint's Day offer you can 'Fly the Flag' and put a crease in your trousers at the same time!

Send just £199 to Gnome St George's Offer, Unit 1,094,612, The Industrial Estate, Tiananmen Road, Ghuangzhou, China (formerly Tibet).



Miss Joan Hunter Dunn, A Retrospective

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Joan Hunter Dunn, Muse To The Late Poet Laureate Sir John Betjeman

So. Farewell
Then Joan Hunter
Dunn.

Many people thought
That John Betjeman
Had made up
Your name to
Rhyme with
"Aldershot
Sun".

But you were
In fact a real
Person.

And now you
Have died.

But you will live on
Forever.

Thanks to the
Immortal lines
Of my fellow
Poet.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

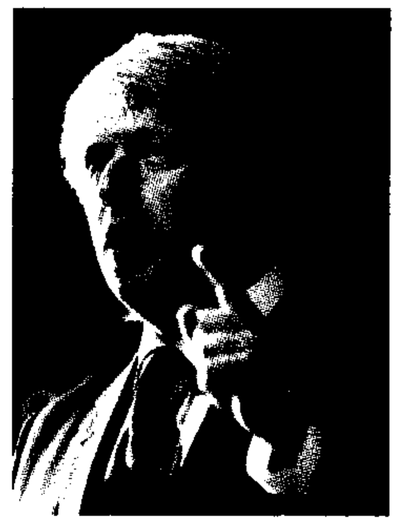
News in Brief

LABOUR TAX REBELS WARNING

LABOUR'S ten-pence tax rebels have continued to highlight the plight of the Labour council candidates at the May 1st elections who will be thousands of votes worse off thanks to the change.

"The scrapping of the ten pence tax rate is going to mean these councillors are going to lose their wards through no fault of their own and Gordon Brown knows that," warned one rebel. *(Reuters)*

YES! IT'S BORING JOHNSON



by Our Political Staff **Charles Boore**

THE NEW-LOOK Conservative candidate for Mayor, Boring Johnson, has stunned voters in the run-up to the election by an extraordinary succession of non-gaffes.

"You've just got no idea what sensible statement he's going to make next," said one baffled observer. "With his tousle-free hair, tucked-in shirt and detailed views on inter-borough financial relations, he has really not set this election on fire!"

Boring has unimpressed voters with his new style of campaigning.

'He's wowed no one," said Londoner Mohammed Zbrwski-Smith, "and wherever he goes he doesn't come up with jokes, quips or outrageous views on minorities."

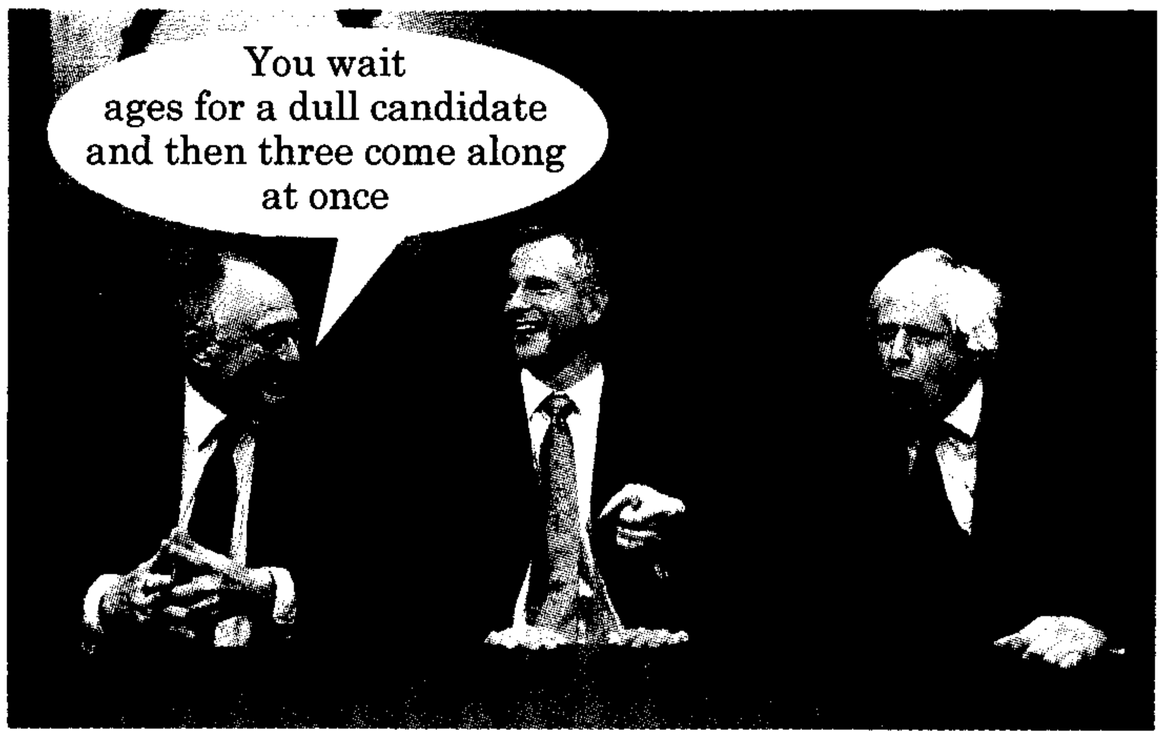
Bland Hair

But Boring hopes that his new strategy will pay dividends by making him even more boring than Ken Livingstone, with him thereby ending up as London Maybor *(surely 'Mayor'? Ed.)*.

In an unrousing plea, Boring now pledges that he will be "Tough on cripes! Tough on the causes of cripes!" *(That's enough Boring Johnson. Ed.)*

On Other Pages
■ My Five Boring Pledges For A More Boring London by Boring Johnson

TRANSPORT POLICY LATEST



Court Circular

Highgrove, Tuesday

His Royal Highness Marshal of the Royal Air Force Prince William (Pilot Officer Wales) will fly a training mission in a Chinook helicopter, Heir Force One, from Highgrove House, Gloucestershire to a rendezvous with His Royal Highness Field Marshal Prince Harry (Lieutenant Wales) at the Slug & Ferret public house in Upper Wheatcroft, near Aldershot, Hants. After a refuelling stop, during which Their Royal Highnesses will consume 16 pints of old English vodka, the training flight will continue to a further rendezvous with the Shortly To Be Royal Highness Ms Kate Middleton in a field near her Dad's house at Quickbucklebury, Berks.

The Royal Party may be joined at this point by the following service personnel: Toby Ricketson-Smythe, The Hon 'Fruity' Frutella-Marjoribanks, Rupert Twystleton-Twytte, Lady Bulimia Vomit and a number of other guests too drunk to stand up or indeed remember their names.

The flight will continue somewhat erratically to somewhere or other, possibly the Isle of Wight (or it might be the Isle of Mull), where they will have a bloody good piss-up involving the consumption of the following items: 10 barrels O'Grady's Genuine Cornish Cider; 300 bottles Bacardi Rum 'n' Nitroglycerine; 1600 cans of 'Beijing Bomber' Chinese lager and one packet of Osama's Pork Scratchings.

The Royal Helicopter will then be commandeered by the RAF Medical Corps to take them to the nearest A&E Department to resuscitate the survivors of "Operation Legless".

Wednesday

Their Royal Highnesses will receive Campaign Medals for Services to the Drinks Industry. *(That's enough Court Circular. Ed.)*

DIARY

THE RT HON JOHN PRESCOTT MP

It's 2005 or thereabouts and I'm sat at an official banquet in the Guildhall I think it were, next to the Queen of the Neverlands, I forget her full name, Her Royal Majesty Something-or-Other, and enjoying tucking into my starter.

"Only trouble with Prawn Cocktails," I say to her as I lick my spoon, "is that they're always too small, don't you find?"

The lady mutters something. As I'm reaching for the bread and butter, I notice there's still the heck of a lot of Prawn Cocktail left in her glass dish and she's just pecking at it. So to help her out, I say: "Tell you what, we'll swap dishes – you take mine and I'll take yours! That way we'll both be happy! Vous comprenay?"

And with that, I reach out for her Prawn Cocktail – retaining my own spoon, I don't want to catch her foreign germs – and I polish it off there and then, even the lettuce, leaving the plate nice and clean.

"Very tasty!" I say, patting my stomach in a light-hearted gesture but being royal and foreign – not that I've got anything against foreigners, mind, it's just their food I can't abide! – she's very stiff and doesn't respond.

So I turn to the gentleman on my right, the President of Venice or Venezuela or whatever, and try to break the ice. "Not finishing your Prawn Cocktail then, Pedro? Defeated you, has it?"

The guy looks back at me as though I'm talking double-dutch, so I speak louder. "DEFEATED YOU HAS IT?"

To set him at his ease, I reach over, shove my spoon in his Prawn Cocktail and help him out with it. And very tasty it is too, very tasty indeed.

"Much-o grassy-arse, mon amigo!" I say with a pleasant chuckle, very slow so's he'll understand, and grab myself another couple of bread-rolls before the waiter runs off with them. These official banquets can leave one feeling very peckish, so it's lucky I've had a burger and beans before I came out, washed down with sherry trifle and cheddar cheese and rounded off with a tin of Condensed, all very pleasant. Yes, I do love my food.

Come my main course, the old tum is up to its tricks again making me feel I'm full when I'm not but I don't want to miss out on the meat course – I've always loved my meat – so I seek to remedise the situation. I look over the President's shoulder, very discreetly you understand, for a toilet. But there isn't one within a hundred yards, and I don't want to disruptify the banquet, but on the other hand I have no intention of going without, so while the President's talking to the person on his right and the Queen's talking to the person on her left I reach for the old napkin.

I were once Chief Steward, so there's nothing you can teach me about napkin-folding. In seconds, I've folded my napkin into the shape of a bucket, and am just adding the finishing touches to the handle and preparing to do my business when Queen Snooty of the Neverlands turns round and asks me where exactly I live blah blah blah.

No way am I going to let chit-chat get in the way of me and my meat so I pass her the napkin-bucket and say to her, very polite, "Hold this, Your Majesty, if you'd be so kind," then poke my little finger down my throat and have a right good sick-up into it, all very discreet, mmm, that's better, wipe the old mouth nice and clean then repossess my napkin-bucket and remark "You won't be needing that no more, thanks most kindly."

I stuff the napkin in my right-hand jacket pocket and carry on with my supping. The meat is beautifully tender and the potatoes just right. The soufflé is a little over-done, but the portions are reasonable and service prompt.

After dinner, we're ushered out into a great hall for liqueurs and coffee and Elizabeth Shaw mints, which I've frankly never liked, they're too small, but luckily I've taken the trouble of hiding a tin of Condensed Milk behind a curtain on the way in so I make my excuses and polish it off in the vestibule.

So we're all milling around in the hall with our coffees when Tony beckons me over saying, "John, there's someone here I want you to meet!" It's Henry Kissinger, no less. I want to give the right impression, so I stick my right hand in my jacket pocket, all suave-like, as I make my approach.

"Dr Kissinger," says Tony, "may I introduce my Deputy Prime Minister?"

"Delighted to meet you, I'm sure," I say, all sophisticated. I pull my right hand out of my jacket pocket and give his a good strong shake.

"Mein Gott!" says Kissinger. We all glance down. There's this gooey stuff, bitty and that, dripping off his hand. Tony throws me one of his looks, as if to say it's all my fault! But as I told Pauline after, you can hardly call it my fault if they don't provide accessible toilet facilities at these hoity-toity venues, it's high time something was done about it, it's always the working classes what get the blame and the chinless public school brigade who are let off scot-free, so those of us who, for reasons of pressure and stress at work, sometimes putting in sixteen, seventeen, eighteen hours a day, find it necessary to sick up our food, should be given every facility for so doing.

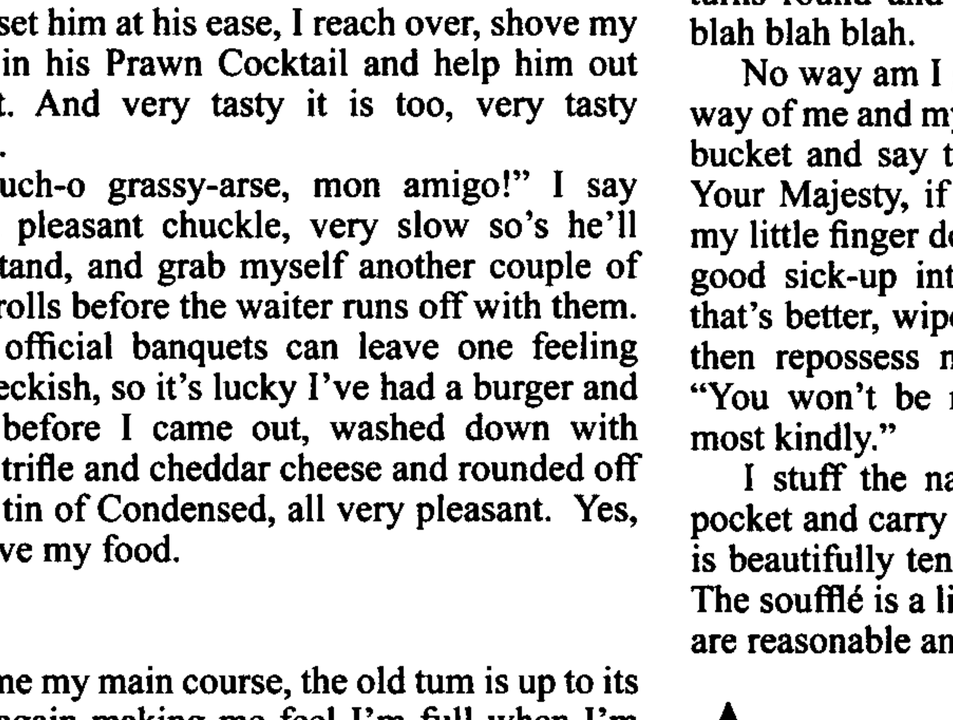
I attempt to make light of the goo with our distinguished guest. "Wipe it off, Henry! What do you think sleeves are for?!" I jest. But he doesn't see the funny side. Very German!

I share my limo back with Harriet Harman and offer her a bite of the Assorted Combination Appetiser for Four Persons I've just collected from the takeaway. But Harriet says she's that full she couldn't take any more. Very New Labour! I say, and then I decide to let her in on my little secret.

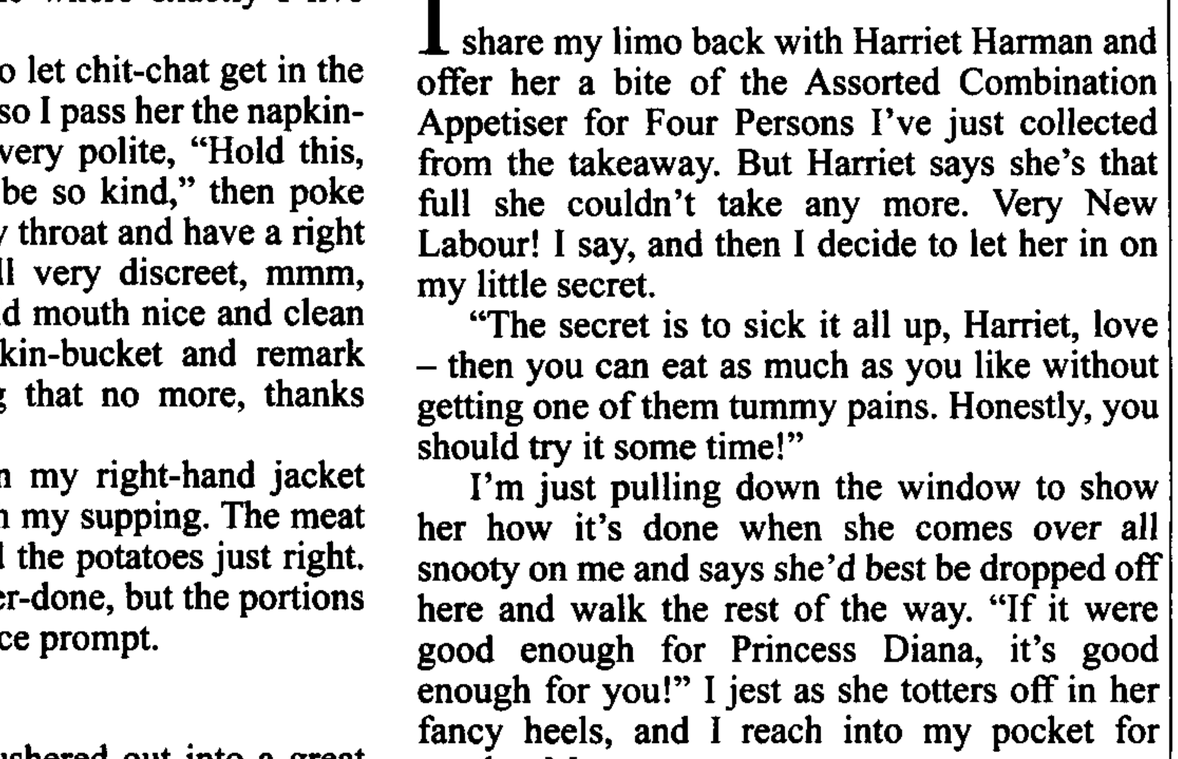
"The secret is to sick it all up, Harriet, love – then you can eat as much as you like without getting one of them tummy pains. Honestly, you should try it some time!"

I'm just pulling down the window to show her how it's done when she comes over all snooty on me and says she'd best be dropped off here and walk the rest of the way. "If it were good enough for Princess Diana, it's good enough for you!" I jest as she totters off in her fancy heels, and I reach into my pocket for another Mars.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN



"Just for the hell of it we thought we'd all come here and start a panic..."



"Sorry about the mess – Marjory and I are hoarding food"

Literary Review

Sister sludge

Anne's Song
Anne Nolan
(Century, £12.99)

YOU have to feel for publishers. Armed with their diligently acquired 2:1s in English, they probably imagined spending the rest of their days publishing delicate literary novels and definitive biographies of the great and good.

Instead, they must climb over each other to buy up misery memoirs by lesser-known members of the Nolan Sisters. It can hardly be the most dignified way to make a living. You might as well sell yourself to the white slave trade and be done with it.

Anne Nolan was in fact the eldest of the Nolans, whose greatest hit, *I'm in the Mood for Dancing*, is regularly played by sadistic local radio DJs to this day. Maybe shamefully, the sisters' story has not previously been related in hard covers, and probably never would have been if Anne hadn't had a deadly secret to tell. For, in the long tradition of showbiz families forced out on stage in terrible outfits almost before they could walk, the Nolans were terrorised by a tyrannical father, Tommy.

Like the Osmonds, Jacksons and Beach Boys before them, the Nolans knew who was boss, and it wasn't them. Dad was "the life and soul of any gathering" and "always the first to stand a round of drinks". But like Darth Vader, he had a dark side. When Anne was 16, he took her for a drive, stopped the car and "said, almost matter-of-factly, 'Why don't the two of us run away together?'"

Anne thought her head would explode – which, if nothing else, would have made a surprising end to the anecdote. But, as we later discover, this hadn't been the first time Tommy had attempted to redefine his relationship with his daughter. When she was 12, her father abused her almost every day. She feels, not unreasonably, that this blighted her life, and for many years she told no one. Now, possibly to make up for this, she is telling everyone in grisly detail. Chapter titles include "Abandoned", "The Ultimate Betrayal" and "Suffer the Little Children", the last a chapter title all misery memoirs are now obliged by law to use.

Anne's Song, therefore, fulfils all the customary requirements of this very jaded genre. Abuse notwithstanding, she is obliged to stress what a happy childhood it was, recalling: "I was rarely indoors... We were never supervised, but life seemed somehow so much safer back then." As long as you didn't go back indoors, of course. "We might not have been rich in terms of material possessions, but we were loved and we were happy. There's no price you can put on that."

Mum was a plain cook. "We loved her banana sandwiches, and I remember Denise was particularly partial to her rice puddings."

The defining characteristic of the Nolans was their extreme ordinariness, which at the time just seemed naff but now seems quite refreshing. Unlike most celeb memoirists, Anne isn't egocentric, self-deluding, self-aggrandising or even self-pitying: indeed, she's recognisably human. But the downside is that she also has almost nothing interesting to say. True, she did once tour South Africa with Rolf Harris.

and there was that summer season in Eastbourne with Ronnie Corbett ("such a nice man"). But that's not quite enough to keep you going for 290 disastrously boring pages.

The big surprise is that (unless we have missed something) she is the first of the Nolans to go into print. There are five other sisters and two brothers, all of whom have tales to tell, even if it's the same tale. Pity those poor publishers, several of whom are taking calls from agents at this very moment...

Books & Bookmen

■ THE *Guardian*'s George Monbiot echoes the *Eye* in wondering why British newspapers have been so reluctant to review *Rupert's Adventures in China* by Bruce Dover, the Dirty Digger's former vice-president in the People's Republic.

He quotes the book's UK publisher: "I thought this was a natural for serialisation. We had the author primed and prepared to come over here. But we had to cancel as we could not raise enough interest. We've hit brick walls and we don't understand why."

Monbiot puts some of the blame on the "anticipatory compliance" exercised by Murdoch editors in suppressing anything that might offend the boss. "But what of the other papers? Why should they appease Murdoch?" Why indeed. He could ask the same question of the British newspaper which revealed last summer that an uncomplimentary profile of Wendi Deng had been spiked by Australian editors for fear of upsetting the Digger. The British paper bought the offending profile itself for a considerable sum, but was then too cowardly to publish it (*Eye* 1188).

Monbiot omits to mention this case – perhaps wisely, since the pusillanimous British rag was none other than the *Grauniad*

■ "IF YOU asked ten publishers what the future of publishing is you would get ten different answers," Scott Pack, publishing big mouth and commercial director of The Friday Project told the *Times* last month. One thing the future of publishing certainly doesn't hold is Pack's company.

The spectacular collapse of the massively hyped The Friday Project, best known for turning popular blogs into books, has left many out of pocket, but it's certainly looking like a win for HarperCollins, which gets to cherry-pick the assets without paying off a single penny of the company's debts.

Cornish printer MPG is owed £150,000 following the publisher's liquidation last month. Many freelance contractors will not be paid for thousands of pounds worth of work done; and already-published authors won't be paid their royalties.

Meanwhile HarperCollins is in "ongoing negotiations" to take over some elements of the business, including three of the staff, but not the enormous liabilities – which is nice for HarperCollins. The liquidators say there are assets of just £50,000 to cover reported debts of £1.79m.

Unsurprisingly, many of the authors and other contractors have blogged about their experiences. Some are furious that they were encouraged to keep on producing work that will now never be published or paid for, even while – they have now learned – takeover negotiations with HarperCollins were already going on behind the scenes.

■ THE *Times* has gone potty about Patricia Cornwell. Preceded by a cover interview in the Saturday magazine, extracts from her forthcoming novel, *The Front*, are appearing daily for a fortnight (do *Times* readers really crave daily gore?); every day a photo of her appears in the paper's front-page "flannel panel", and further images of her are generously scattered within.

You wouldn't guess from this two-week single-author festival that everyone else who writes crime fiction or about it believes Cornwell lost the plot long ago. Among them, awkwardly, is the *Times's* crime reviewer Marcel Berlins: in 2003 he declared (when reviewing *Blow Fly*) that her novels were "becoming increasingly eccentric and grotesque – all pretence to anything realistic or believable has been abandoned".

Since then he's chosen not to review her output, confining himself to sideswipes such as the comment that "with Patricia Cornwell still well below her best, Kathy Reichs is the monarch of that growing band who specialise in the stomach-turning task of analysing dead bodies".

But it seems *Times* executives don't read him – or indeed her.

■ JOANNA TROLLOPE has apparently defected from Bloomsbury over the publisher's obsessive focus on the Harry Potter books. But the last one was published in hardback in 2007 and the air of authorial restlessness at the publishers may have other origins.

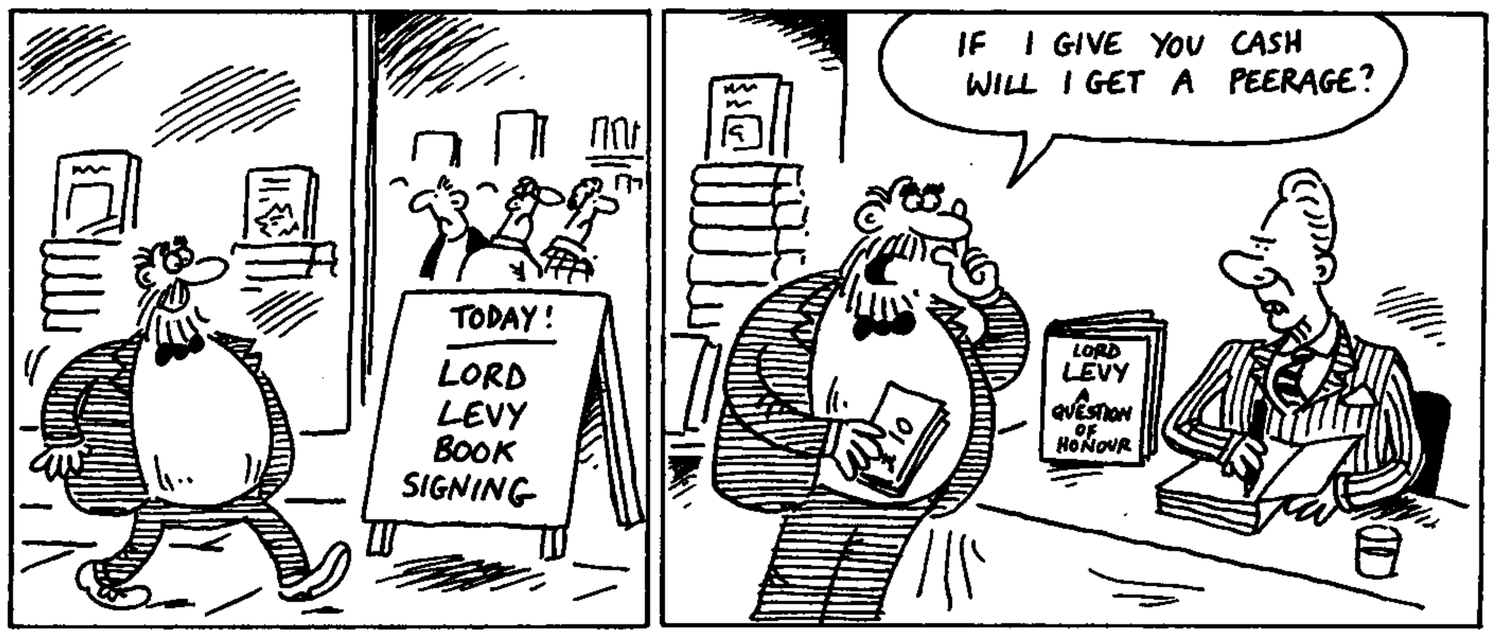
The approaching end of the Potter bonanza has led to job cuts, removing familiar faces and reducing TLC. And there's a marked change in atmosphere. Much-loved founder editor Liz Calder is now rarely in the building, and at last year's 21st birthday bash chairman Nigel Newton announced the signing of controversial maverick Richard "Barkin'" Charkin as executive director.

Whether or not (as is widely believed) Charkin has never seen the point of trade publishing, his arrival means the firm – originally distinctly feminist, as shown by its Diana the huntress logo – is now dominated by two macho big beasts.

Bookworm continues over ☛

enquiries and donations to Anthony Clarke, Funeral Director, The Ashes, Cartmel Fell, Grange-O-Sands,

Westmorland Gazette



e. e. cummings

■ WHEN the star US-based British critic James Wood published his first and so far only novel five years ago, Adam Mars-Jones walloped *The Book Against God* in the *Observer* for its "insufferable narrator", "slim narrative", excessive time spent "in the narrator's head" and (most woundingly for such an assiduous stylist) "awkward figurative language".

So when Wood reviewed Mars-Jones's own debut novel in the *London Review of Books* plenty of connoisseurs rubbed their hands at the prospect of a revenge match – quite possibly including the ostensibly high-minded *LRB* editors who invited him.

In fact the *New Yorker* critic's response to *Pilcrow* includes some kind words ("admirably courageous", etc) that Faber will no doubt quote with relief on the paperback jacket. On inspection, however, they invariably turn out to be double-edged or followed by "buts". Between the lines, the review can be read as a hatchet job: the novel is boring, over-long ("you feel a version of Zeno's paradox will stop you from ever reaching its end"), shapeless ("boldly refusing the everyday consolations of plot and dramatic structure"), full of over-familiar boys' school/gay growing-up material, and writing that is "facile" and preening.

Wood, you suspect, is showing that he could take revenge if he chose, but has opted instead for the mercy of ambiguity. The giveaway sentence? "It could be an easy novel to mock, as Mars-Jones, who has done quite a bit of mocking himself as the regular reviewer for the *Observer*, surely knows all too well". With the critic who now so nobly refrains from mocking him back (not crudely, at least) among his chief victims.

'Bookworm'

WHAT YOU DIDN'T MISS, Pt 94

Renegade: The Lives and Tales of Mark E. Smith

Mark E. Smith
(Viking, £18.99)

On his early life

Is this fookin' thing switched on...? Right, then... Cheers... No, ah'm not raising me voice, else I'll miss the Karaoke... Cheers mate... Me childhood? It was all right, torturing me sisters and trading porn mags with them Irish lads. I feel sorry for kids these days. They're missing out on things. Not that I enjoyed myself, mind. At school they read us the fookin' *Hobbit*. Can you imagine that? This book about some tiny fucker who lives in a hole. I couldn't get me head round that...

I couldn't afford to go to college: went for about three months, but I never had any money. Not that I liked it, mind, fuckers telling you what to do. Educate yourself, that's always been my philosophy. George V. Higgins – that's a good writer. You don't get fellows like that on any of the reading lists. Not, that I agree with reading lists, mind. You don't fookin' tell me what to read... [*continues*]

On his public image

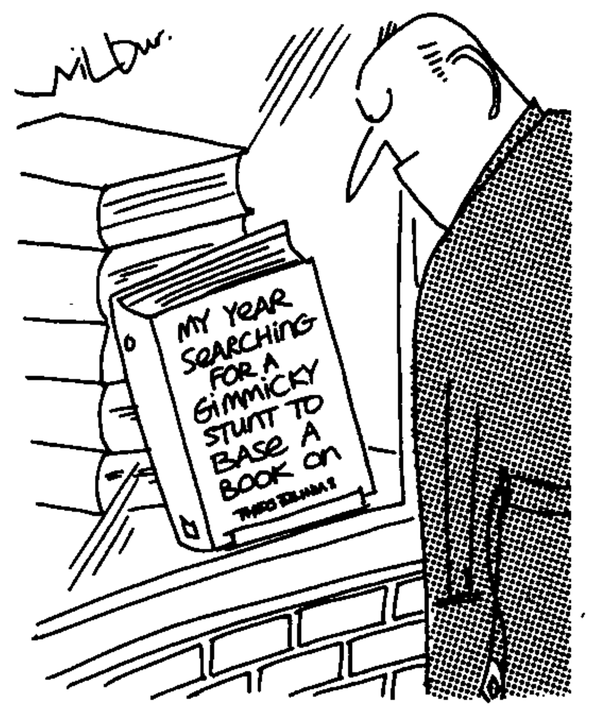
I really do think there's people who think I'm an aggressive character, y'know, some kind of maniac... Look, just fuck *off* will y' pal, else I'll... Right, I fookin' *told you*, you fucker... Anyway, it's mostly journalists as do that, that fookin' Paul Morley... [*rambles uncertainly for some minutes*] Ask anyone that's been in The Fall – that bloke there, he played bass for us for ten minutes in 1980, or was it 1981 – and they'll tell y', Mark, he looks after his own. That time I clobbered Eric Lard [Fall lead guitarist, 13 September – 3 October 1982] with his Fender Stratocaster – fookin' poncey guitar, I mean why couldn't he have a Woolworth's one like everyone else? – it were all over the papers – trust that fookin' Paul Morley – but what no one ever remembers is that it was me that took him down Casualty and phoned his dad to say "Your wanker of a son's had an accident". Credit where credit's due. The fucker.

On the band's early days

Rat Street, Prestwich was quite a going place at the time. Always plenty of vomit on the doorsteps at Christmas, which is a sign that folk aren't feeling the pinch... Good solid working class people... Not that I liked it, mind. Then when I saw the Pistols at the Lesser Free Trade Hall in '76, I thought "My lot aren't as bad as that." Not that they were any good, mind. There's people who'll say "that Mark, he's a fookin' dictator, he'll sack his band every fookin' week", but the way I see it is, them musicians, y'have to watch them, always ready to get pissed... Cheers mate... and shout their mouths off about things they know nowt about. The fuckers.

On the sartorial niceties

As a band, we've always dressed sharp. You have to. That Oxfam shop on Salford High Street sells some all right stuff at a fair price. There's times I've taken the whole band in there – well, them that I hadn't fired that morning – and had them kitted out with flares and red-and-white tank-tops. Nobody rates a scruff. Not that I've ever really bothered about clothes, mind... [*continues endlessly*]



MODESTY BLAZE

"I DON'T read books. I'm sorry. I can't. I can't read books, other people's books. After the first sentence, the first paragraph, I'm off on my own scenario. It's no longer their book. I'm not reading it any more, I've put it down before turning the first page, I'm writing my own chapters, fitting in my own characters, trying to make it take off my way. So this would happen, then that would happen, of course that character would... no, it's hopeless, so now I just don't."

– Interview with Ricky Gervais, the Observer, *20 April.*

As an intuitive, I read clients' energy while opening up to a really high consciousness... I'm a reflector. I hold up a mirror: 'This is what you're not seeing; this is why it's difficult.' It's a self-empowering process...In the beginning I was a walking receptor. If I wanted to go to the pub, it would get spiritually really noisy...I have to wear black to work. Vibrationally, it's very protective.

Professional Intuitive KATE WINTERBOURNE,
Sunday Times Style Section

For years, we had those chairs with flimsy metal legs that everyone puts in restaurants. They were cheap and nasty things from some mail-order catalogue and would bend on our flag floor. It made me realise the mistake of buying rubbish; it just made me feel dirty. Sitting on our Ercol chairs, for me, felt like redemption. I had been forgiven.

Grand Designs presenter KEVIN McCLOUD, ***Times Magazine***

Pseuds Corner

...*Third* [the new Portishead album] is a great thing indeed, transcending the torch-gloom sound-scapists' 'trip-hop' designation in its mood-scapes, racked sonic bustle and overall air of gob-smacking avant-noir mentalism.

KEVIN HARLEY's 'Gig of the week', The Information, ***Independent***

WALTON-HAYFIELD On 26th March 2008, to REBECCA and MARK, a precious son, Ptolemy Ned, brother to the gorgeous Atticus Monty, and the beautiful Octavius Kit.

Daily Telegraph **birth announcement**

Arsenal played mesmerising, tantalising football to bewitch their opponents... On one level, it was football so delicious to the eye that you just wanted to smother it in whipped cream and spoon it down your throat.

MARTIN ZIEGLER, PA Sport

It is a tragedy of apocalyptic dimensions, a human catastrophe comparable to the melting of the ice-caps and the devastation of the rainforests rolled into one. Arsenal have been knocked out of the Champions League and have all but run out of steam in the race for the Barclays Premier League title. Anyone not inclined to lament, mourn and bewail this fact is not in possession of a soul.

You may say that I am exaggerating, but this is about more than mere football. It is about music and poetry, aesthetics and artistry, hope and audacity...[continues]

MATTHEW SYED,
The Times

Pseuds Educational

What is fat studies?

Fat studies is an important and emerging interdisciplinary area of study incorporating scholarship from the humanities and social sciences. Contributors to the discipline confront and critique cultural constraints against notions of fatness and the fat body. As with women's studies, queer studies and disability studies, there is a political imperative to the work within fat studies, with an aim to create social change around issues of weight oppression, through promoting size acceptance and body diversity.

Forthcoming conference, University of York

CONTRIBUTORS: Judith Salomon, Nicki Dixon, Mike Crawford, Niall Haslett, David Turner, Steve Walmsley, Dennis Price.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

THE ACTIS SCANDAL

Lies of the land

STRANGELY for a Whitehall department that recently set up a £100m "governance and transparency" fund to help campaigners hold foreign governments to account, the Department for International Development will happily tell the odd porky if it thinks it will avert awkward questions about itself.

Following the *Eye's* exposure of how publicly-owned development fund CDC, which invests in business in poor countries, pays just 1.4 percent tax on its profits, Lib Dem shadow development secretary Michael Moore asked to see the fund's 79 subsidiary companies' accounts to get to the bottom of the scandal. When he was told by Development Secretary Douglas Alexander that these were "not available from CDC", the *Eye* (1207) speculated that this was probably a lie. And so it proves, as CDC has been forced to admit to the *Eye* under freedom of information laws that it *does* have the accounts.

Despite boasting a "record of open communication and accountability", CDC still won't hand over accounts for its main subsidiaries, claiming that even though the companies ultimately belong to the taxpayer they are "commercially sensitive". Perhaps DfID will direct some its drive for "transparency" to its own development fund.

● CDC chief executive Richard Laing was equally keen to cover up when he appeared on Radio 4's ***Today*** programme to discuss the fund's barnstorming 79 percent profit increase in 2007.

Picking up on the *Eye's* revelations of the firm's 1.4 percent tax rate, reporter Greg Wood posed the obvious question: "You own a number of companies registered in offshore tax havens and as a result you pay very little in tax to the governments of those countries where those profits are generated. How do you justify that?"

"Well, actually that's not true," replied Laing, "erm, we pay a lot of tax in the local countries". Well, actually it *is* true. CDC's worldwide accounts for 2006 show it paid £4.8m in tax on £340m of pre-tax profits (the figures for 2007 are £19.2m and £626m). Even if gains from selling investments are ignored, the tax charge is miniscule. Calls to the fund to substantiate Laing's claim to "pay a lot of tax" (like all previous requests for an explanation) continue to be ignored.

Other remarkable 2007 results included Laing's personal share of the development booty. His pay went up 13 percent to £970,000, plus £145,000 worth of pension contributions.

PS: Richard Laing will soon be pontificating on development as a judge at this year's *FT* sustainable finance awards at The Dorchester. Development funds and tax dodging are certainly sustaining *him* pretty well.

PPS: Laing also sits on the advisory council of the Overseas Development Institute think tank. If he cares to read its research, he'll find plenty exposing the harm caused by under-investment in African agriculture – precisely the area CDC has deserted in pursuit of more cash.

● MUCH of CDC's record return came in the shape of the £281m profit on selling power companies within its Globeleq group in Bangladesh, Egypt and Latin America, some of which it had acquired as recently as 2006.

Big sell-offs mean big bunce for the top men at the fund management arm of CDC that was sold off (to a group of, er, CDC bosses) as Actis in 2004. Papers seen by the *Eye* suggest the Actis partners will gain around 10 percent of the Globeleq windfall as "carried interest". This is a triumph for Actis suits, including senior partner Paul Fletcher, who trousers around 4.5 percent of Actis's carried interest gains and chief investment officer Alistair who takes around 3 percent.

Suitably incentivised by the prospect of several hundred grand, Mackintosh was parachuted in as chairman of Globeleq in late 2006 to push through the Asian and Latin American sales. With the job done he swiftly stepped down at the end of last year.

So trebles all round? Not if you're a Globeleq customer in Africa. Prices have escalated as privatised power generators are passed from one owner to another, notably in Uganda where the few who can afford to be wired up faced increases of 70 percent, according to War on Want.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

31 Companies owned by development fund CDC in developing countries

33 Companies owned by CDC in tax havens including Bermuda, Mauritius, British Virgin Islands and Jersey

NEW TOWNS

Eco from the past

FIFTEEN new settlements in the countryside, designed as self-contained, state-of-the-art communities? It all sounds very familiar. But Gordon Brown's eco-towns initiative – one of the big ideas of his long-forgotten honeymoon – has more than just superficial connections with the new towns movement that brought us such architectural delights as Cumbernauld and Crawley.

The cheerleader and adviser to the government on this issue is the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA), the organisation founded by Ebenezer Howard in 1899 as the Garden City Movement. Howard's ideas were not only highly influential in development circles – the classic 1930s suburb is based on some of his principles – they also became the bedrock of post-war government policy, given a modernist gloss as the new towns. The Conservatives ended the whole policy in the 1980s. But the TCPA has been lobbying the government on the need for new settlements ever since Labour returned to power in 1997.

English Partnerships, the quango branded as "the national regeneration agency", is another adviser on eco-towns. It has a more direct connection with the failed *grand projets* of the past: half of it was once the Commission for New Towns, the body set up in the 1960s to deal with the settlements.

Both bodies are still staffed by energetic defenders of the new towns concept – people who claim that the likes of Telford are successful model communities. None of this bodes well for the long-term success of these new settlements, but there are several other reasons the eco-towns could be even less successful than their concrete cousins.

Housing minister Caroline Flint states that none will be built on green belt land. Of course not – the green belts surround our cities, preventing them from sprawling. So, to avoid transgressing this particular policy, the eco-towns will be built *beyond* them, in far more rural surroundings. As a result they will be quite a

Housing on the former Caterham Barracks site

distance from any cities, where the jobs are and to which most future inhabitants will presumably commute by whatever means they see fit – hardly the greenest of approaches. The government claims the settlements will be self-sufficient, providing all the jobs, schools and hospitals the residents need. But most of the towns will contain around 5,000 homes – hardly enough to sustain anything like the amenities a real community needs.

Take one new town, Middle Quinton in Warwickshire, which will consist of 6,000 homes. The nearest town, Stratford-on-Avon, has far more houses than this, but a large number of its inhabitants drives to work, shop or play in the Birmingham or Coventry area to the north. Why will Middle Quinton be any different? It does have a spur to the Worcester-Oxford-London railway line, but this isn't going to be much use unless the inhabitants are commuting for four hours each day to Paddington at vast expense.

So, lobbying aside, what is the real reason for the eco-towns project? A quick browse through the selected sites reveals that six of the 15 are on former military bases. Gordon has been desperately trying to sell defence sites to balance the public books since he was next door at number 11. Unfortunately most were hard to shift as they were constrained by planning policy and remoteness from towns and other infrastructure. Rebranding them as groovy new "eco-towns" seems to be the answer.

POLICE COMPLAINTS

This case is Knackered

***EYE* readers will no doubt recall the extraordinary case of Gary Mills and Tony Poole. After 14 years in jail for murder, they were freed in June 2003 due to the lack of integrity of the prosecution (including a key witness being told by police not to turn up at court).**

More than four years ago they lodged a complaint with the Crown Prosecution Service alleging criminal conduct by police. They claimed that the No 2 in the murder inquiry – former Detective Inspector Trevor Gladding – had perverted the course of justice and perjured himself.

Allegations of serious malpractice were also made against other officers. Two different sets of appeal judges, a high court jury and a former lord chief justice were far from impressed with Gladding's conduct.

The CPS referred their complaint to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) for investigation in April 2004 and it became a major test of the independence of the new body. Nearly four years on, the IPCC has at last produced a provisional report dismissing the complaint. But when the *Eye* asked about the findings, a spokesman said: "The investigation report belongs to Gloucestershire Constabulary and it is for them to decide what can be released into the public domain... The matter has now been concluded and the complaints were unsubstantiated."

This finding contradicts all previous inquiries, and this is the case of which Lord Woolf said: "Almost every aspect of this prosecution is tarnished." The investigation took almost four years to reach incredible conclusions at great expense in a report that will almost certainly never see the light of day.

In the Back continues overleaf ➤

SPORTS ROUND-UP

Mounting Olympics

LAST WEEK's public accounts committee (PAC) report on the gross underestimates and omissions that rigged London's 2012 Olympic bid contained one startling £600m *over*estimate – for the amount the private sector would contribute. Where on earth did the figures come from?

Step forward consultants Partnerships UK. *Eye* readers will recall that "PUK", as it's known, was set up by Gordon Brown as the Treasury's PFI taskforce in 1997, before being privatised with its snappy new name. Staffed by bankers and consultants, one thing it should have been able to help on is how much the private sector might stump up.

The Olympic bid isn't the only recent disaster thrown up by publicly-funded PUK. As joint owner of Partnerships for Schools, responsible for the £45bn Building Schools for the Future PFI programme, last month it was forced to announce that the immensely bureaucratic initiative would not complete its scheduled refurbishment of all schools by 2020 (Brown originally claimed it would happen by 2015). Far from it, in fact. Instead all local authorities will choose three or four of the neediest schools; the rest will have "plans" by 2020.

Even the job PUK was originally set up for – making PFI work – isn't going well, meeting heavy criticism from MPs who see no sign of improvement in PFI deals crossing their desks. All of which suggests it's time for a hard look at whether PUK gives the taxpayer value for money. Happily for the bankers, however, when PUK flew the Treasury nest 11 years ago it escaped the National Audit Office's remit and, despite controlling billions of pounds of public money, is now completely unaccountable. No wonder the already unaffordable Olympics faces a further financial hurdle.

NOPES-hopers

WHILE the government is apparently willing to shovel infinite funds at the London 2012 Games, tens of millions of pounds promised to ordinary grassroots sports are now five years overdue.

Tony Blair announced the £750m New Opportunities for PE and Sports (NOPES) fund at the 2000 party conference, describing the three-year scheme as "not just a sports policy. It's a health policy, an education policy, an anti-crime policy, an anti-drugs policy." But as with the money promised for children's playgrounds (see *Eye 1207*), the government proved extremely reluctant to actually dish out the cash.

Three years after the announcement, when MPs asked how much had actually been spent by NOPES, the numbers they were given totted up to a mere £121m. But the then sports minister Richard Caborn reassured parliament that the majority of NOPES-funded facilities were on schedule for completion by 2006.

In 2006 there was a brief fuss after the London *Evening Standard* reported that more than half of the fund was, in fact, still unspent, but the Big Lottery Fund brushed the accusations aside, saying that some local authorities had simply not yet "drawn down their allocation".

After another two years (now eight years on from the announcement), and with the health, education and criminality of the nation's youth at stake, surely the money has all been spent? The latest spending figures were obtained by Lib Dem culture spokesman Don Foster. They show that the slow drip-feed of funding has now reached £690m, still £60m short of target. Though £60m might not buy an Olympic stadium, it could provide sports facilities for an awful lot of youngsters.

Field of dreams

ALL that the Friends of Ravenhurst Playing Fields longed to do was protect a precious patch of green space in central Birmingham. But last month lawyers for a community of Catholic priests wrote to the campaigners demanding they abandon all claim to "recreational rights" over the land or risk becoming defendants in an expensive high court case.

The playing field, once part of a Catholic school, is owned by Birmingham's Fathers of the Oratory Catholic community. It was previously leased to a rugby club; but since the club moved out several years ago, the site, which includes a pavilion and tennis courts, has been largely neglected.

Last year the *Birmingham Evening Mail* discovered that the Fathers had held secret talks with Sport England and housing developer Wimpey about the possibility of building on a large part of the land, in return for returning a smaller sports pitch to use.

The campaign group has been forced to withdraw its application to Birmingham city council to have Ravenhurst designated a "village" green, and thus be protected from development. More than 40 people had written statements of support, saying they had used the field for recreational purposes for decades. The council was due to consider the application this month, after a year of waiting. But in March the Oratory's lawyers, Pinsent Mason, by-passed the local process and applied for a high court hearing into the land's status. They wrote to all the people who had submitted statements, warning them that unless they retracted, they would be named as defendants.

The Friends group said continuing the fight would have exposed its members, several of whom are pensioners, to "unacceptable financial risk". But they still oppose planning permission to build on the field.

PUBLIC WATCHDOGS

Barking mad

ENERGYWATCH was never the fiercest watchdog, but its about to lose the last of its blunted teeth.

The taxpayer-funded consumer advocate is due to merge with Postwatch and the Consumer Council to become the new National Consumer Council (NCC) in October. Energywatch is asking consumers to complete a survey to help the NCC understand the many problems people face with power companies, but it states that the new organisation "will not provide the independent complaint-handling support Energywatch currently provides".

Energywatch doesn't have any regulatory powers and its achievements were described as "unimpressive" in a National Audit Office report. But it handles more than 60,000 complaints on behalf of customers a year, getting results in cases such as wrongful billing or disconnection when people have been unable to get their power supplier to deal with the situation. Last year it won more than £7m in compensation for customers.

It seems unlikely the suppliers will have improved so much by October that the service will no longer be necessary.

HOSPITAL DEATH

Due care and attention?

IN THE week before Rose Bishop died less than 24 hours after "emergency" admission to Bromley Hospital in Kent, her husband asked no fewer than four different doctors, one of them on two occasions, to find her a bed earlier.

Mrs Bishop, a 51-year-old mother of two, had been losing weight and suffering stomach and back pain, sickness and diarrhoea for two months. But at the end of January 2003 her condition worsened. She couldn't eat, was only taking small sips of water and was in agony. Her anxious husband Ron called out the emergency doctor on three consecutive days: one thought she had gallstones, while another thought ulcers and ordered an urgent referral for an endoscopy to look at her oesophagus and stomach.

Two days later, weak and hardly able to walk, she was taken to Bromley Hospital by ambulance for the examination. Despite her husband's protests, she was sent home afterwards. The examination revealed she had extreme ulceration of her stomach, inflammation and an "infiltrating lesion", which doctors thought might have been cancer.

The next morning, she collapsed. This time, the emergency GP summoned an ambulance to take her to A&E. It took two hours and a 999 call from Mr Bishop before the ambulance arrived. It seems it had not been booked as an emergency.

At hospital, she was seen by a number of junior clinicians, none of whom recognised that her condition merited emergency action. Between 9.10pm that night and 7am the next morning, she was only seen by a medical student.

It was not until the next morning that she was admitted into intensive care, where she was diagnosed with liver and kidney failure. But by then it was too late. She died at 1.20pm. A postmortem showed she had been suffering intestinal bleeding and wearing away of the stomach wall; a secondary factor was congestive heart failure. When she arrived at A&E, no one had bothered to check the findings of her endoscopy and blood tests.

The Bromley Hospitals NHS Trust recently offered a £35,000 settlement for negligence, despite denying that its treatment or any omissions caused or contributed to Mrs Bishop's death, or that her sudden deterioration in hospital could have been foreseen.

His case funded by legal insurance, Mr Bishop has no choice but to accept the offer. But he doesn't want to, as settlement means he will not get the answers that he hoped would emerge in court. There was no inquest. "The money is irrelevant," he told the *Eye*. "I want answers. I want to know exactly how and why she died. If Rose had been diagnosed properly and admitted to hospital earlier, would I still have a wife and my daughters a mother?"

Bromley Hospital Trust said it had made a thorough investigation and had sought to keep Mr Bishop informed throughout. In a prepared statement it expressed its condolences but made no admission of liability.

FOLLOW-UP... FOLLOW-UP... FOLLOW-UP...

■ JIM BATES: The high profile computer "expert" who the Eye revealed in 2005 had been lying about his non-existent qualifications has been given a six-month jail sentence, suspended for two years for perjury and making false statements.

Judge Simon Hammond, who also ordered Bates, 67, to pay £1,000 towards court costs, said he was taking into account Bates's age, his previous good character, the fact that he could no longer work as an expert – and the "invaluable" work he had done in the past to help the police.

As *Eye* readers well know, his expert evidence was used by Scotland Yard to bring ridiculous charges against the then police sergeant Gurpal Virdi of sending race hate mail to fellow ethnic minority officers. At one time when, according to Bates, Virdi was supposed to be at his computer composing the offensive material, the officer was in fact at another police station altogether. On another, pinpointed by Bates, the offensive material had already been printed off and sealed in the office despatch system.

Bates main claim to fame was as the defence expert called in by Brian Stevens, the Soham murder detective, cleared of child pornography offences. Stevens was however later jailed for perjury for concocting a false alibi in the case.

You can contact the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017 or email: strobes@private-eye.co.uk

In the City

A HUGE SIGH of relief went round the Serious Farce Office last week after the RBG Resources result at Southwark crown court – the conviction of Virendra Rastogi and two associates at the end of an eight-month trial and an investigation that began six years ago.

Had Rastogi walked after masterminding a £350m bank fraud, the credibility of the SFO – shredded by the recent high court mauling over BAE Systems – would have taken another big knock. And in the week that new director Richard Alderman took over.

But the RBG trial – which cost perhaps more than £4m and was described by one legal source as "a shambles" – demonstrates much of what is wrong with the way fraud is prosecuted in Britain. A problem addressed in the much-awaited review by former New York prosecutor Jessica De Grazia. She was asked more than a year ago to recommend ways in which the SFO could up its game. Her recommendations – believed to be an attempt to get the SFO closer to US procedures but without the US advantages like plea bargains – are likely to have been signed up for by Alderman before he took over. The conclusions and/or recommendations are believed to have been circulated before his appointment.

De Grazia, whose beat did not include fraud when she worked for veteran Manhattan DA Robert Morgenthau, is understood to believe that the SFO should cut out a lot of the pre-trial work which so widens the gaps between crime and trial. Witness statements, rarely used in the US because of the grand jury system, are a major logjam she has highlighted.

But what is to be done about the one prosecutorial weapon which the SFO does not have: the ability to guarantee much-reduced sentences in return for a guilty plea and cooperation to roll up defendants against the major players? This is why American fraud trials happen faster and the conviction rate is greater.

A mirror fraud to that run by RBG was conducted in the US by Virendra's brother, Narendra Rastogi, and Allied Deals. Both companies defrauded banks for four years with sham documentation into financing non-existent metal trading between what were in reality Rastogi-controlled fake companies and bogus counter-parties around the world. RBG claimed to have a turnover of more than $1bn. At the time RBG and Allied Deals collapsed in 2002 they owed banks in Britain and the US more than £300m. Little has been recovered.

But Narendra Rastogi pleaded guilty in New York in December 2003 and agreed to co-operate, including testifying against his brother for the SFO. Eight other defendants also pleaded guilty. Five more were convicted at trial in 2004 – more than a year before Virendra Rastogi was charged! As in the SFO case, one defendant was acquitted.

That is the power of the plea bargain in a fraud case. But there is still great resistance to such deals in Britain – mainly on the somewhat spurious grounds that they pressurize the innocent to plead guilty. There is much talk that plea bargains will be introduced more widely. But defence lawyers say that without more certainty of prosecution or conviction, and given the relatively short sentences for fraud, why would they advise clients to cut a deal? Narendra Rastogi was jailed in March for seven years, plus five years' probation and ordered to repay $683m. He was facing probably 20 to 30 years.

His brother will be sentenced on 5 June. Virendra Rastogi's innocence was such that the day City Police officers raided the RBG offices in 2002 he was found beside the shredding machine. He is expected to receive a substantial sentence. But will that be 10 years or more despite fighting the case? The longest fraud sentence in Britain is 15 years.

So why did it take so long for the SFO to bring Rastogi, once listed as one of Britain's richest men with friends and consultants like former Labour MP now peer Jack Cunningham and fellow Tory peer Lord Gray and Lib Dem peer Lord Holme, to trial and why did the trial take so long?

Most of the blame rests with court procedures which dictate what evidence is required and how it must be provided and presented. The SFO was not able to rely on the extensive investigations carried out by the RBG liquidator Grant Thornton which bankrupted Virendra Rastogi and his partner Anand Jain in 2005 over debts of £180m. Instead the SFO had to reinvent the RBG wheel. Liquidators are not seen as impartial and their testimony can be attacked as based on hearsay and a lower civil burden of proof. The same problem has delayed another long-running SFO case and added millions to the costs.

Then there is the vexed issue of witness statements. These took more than a year in some cases, especially with the banks and witnesses abroad. Negotiating what Narendra would say about Virendra took 18 months. Each brother accused the other of being the mastermind. With a US plea bargain the defendant's co-operation/ evidence heavily influences the sentence. Any failure to come up to proof can be a deal breaker. The banks and the liquidator's statements required extensive negotiation with their lawyers. All that takes time and costs. US prosecutors haul witnesses before the grand jury and go to trial on what they say there.

Another cause of delay was the need to obtain cooperation from countries where the bogus counter-parties were based, such as the US and Hong Kong. This was a major headache in Dubai and India from where assistance was both late and limited.

Then there were the 500,000 pages of metal trading books which the defence, perhaps understandably, wanted produced into evidence. There was considerable debate about whether this should be funded by legal aid. The cost was put at more than £1m. Eventually an agreement was reached to provide the material although whether the cost was justified is open to question.

RBG collapsed in May 2002. Virendra Rastogi was charged in October 2005. The trial began on 3 September 2007. The jury was told that it would end by February. The prosecution took until 24 January; and the defence for the three defendants until 27 February. Closing arguments then lasted to mid-March.

British judges are reluctant to press for greater speed and less repetition. American judges, who have heavy caseloads and are often former prosecutors, are less patient. British judges tend to recall their days at the bar and be more indulgent. They are also far too concerned about the possibility of an appeal over decisions during the trial so give the defence a great deal of leeway. Too often trial management is the first victim of an SFO prosecution.

A wonderful microcosm of the English way of fraud trials occurred during the RBG trial on 20 February. Resuming after lunch, Lord Carlile, the eminent QC representing Anand Jain and naturally determined to represent his client's best interests in every acceptable way to the utmost, rose to address Judge Wadsworth on a very important matter:

"I'm saving up for a hedge"

Lord Carlile: *Your Honour, I have been informed that Mr Jain and indeed, I'm told, Mr Rastogi were not provided with any lunch at all, because they are, as your Honour knows, vegetarians... I am reluctant to the extreme, I think, to have the defendant continue with his evidence without any sustenance of any kind in the lunch break. It is just not acceptable.*

Judge Wadsworth: *I have had the chief clerk make inquiries of the cells and he was told that your client had refused food, and he has emailed me. What he says the available food was, and there are certainly a number of vegetarian options on it, there is veg curry, vegetarian, bean and potato wedges vegetarian, chilli rice gluten free, vegetable chilli vegan, pilau rice.*

Ms Alison Levitt (also representing Jain): *I'm told, your Honour – the only one of those meals that your Honour read out that was available today was vegetarian chilli, and there was no rice or any form of carbohydrate, and it is not possible to eat vegetarian chilli without rice.*

Lord Carlile: *They have a very, very long day and this is an important part of the defendant's case....We would submit that it is somewhere near the extreme of outrageous that the system cannot provide proper balanced food for people in custody. If they can't do it, then a sealed sandwich from one of the many shops around this area should be acceptable. We live in the real world and we submit –*

Judge Wadsworth: *I'm afraid, Lord Carlile, the real world is that sealed things that go into prison are sometimes very tampered with and very dangerous –*

Lord Carlile: *People should be allowed to stand trial with proper food, proper rest and proper provision. The last thing I want to do is to delay this trial. I want to get on with my re-examination, but the fact is that my client has not been fed and he must be fed, and we submit that your Honour should be insisting that he is fed in a proper way before he is asked a single further question. Our application is that this matter be adjourned for an hour so that appropriate arrangements can be made by the contractors, if necessary, to arrange for two defendants, who are on trial for serious matters, to be fed in a proper and balanced way at lunchtime.*

Judge Wadsworth: *It appears, on what I am told, that when vegetable chilli vegan was offered and refused for lack of rice or carbohydrates, that is not something that ought to delay the court for an hour.*

Lord Carlile: *We would like evidence on that point.*

Judge Wadsworth: *I'm sorry, the evidence comes from your client: that he was offered vegetable chilli vegan and refused it because there was no carbohydrate.*

Lord Carlile: *May I have another moment to take instructions, your Honour, on this, because I regard this as a very important –* (resuming after a short break) *...At lunchtime he was offered item 10 only of the meal request sheet, which is a vegetable chilli vegan, as it is described, but without rice. Every other day it has been served*

☛ See over...

CITY FIRM BANS STRIPPERS AND HOOKERS ON EXPENSE ACCOUNTS

with rice... So the fact is that he says he was offered a vegetable chilli vegan, the sauce with some vegetables in, without the normal portion of hot rice. Apparently we now have a vegetable chilli, which contains 65 calories. I can show your Honour the energy quotient. It says it contains various starches... It is 65 calories times 3, because it is 300grams. So it is 195 calories against a recommended daily intake of around, I think I'm right in saying, 1,800 –

Ms Levitt: *2,000 –*

Lord Carlile: *So it is plainly far less than is needed to sustain life and energy in a long day. We would invite your Honour, reluctantly, to take a robust view of the failure by the authorities to provide a requisite meal.*

Judge Wadsworth: *Yes. I'm afraid that the view I take, robust or not, is that when a defendant has been in custody and been through several weeks of trial, knowing a little changing menu, he has opted for this meal, he may have expected rice as well, but knowing what was required of him this afternoon, namely an hour in the box, he preferred to make a point rather than to take what food was available. In the circumstances, I'm not prepared to delay the court.*

Lord Carlile (*after another short break*): *We are extremely grateful to your Honour for allowing us to consider our professional position in the light of what has occurred and we will, as your Honour expects, of course continue in accordance with the court's decision...*

This remarkable example of Britain's legal finest and the case of the missing rice consumed some 45 minutes of court time (and cost the taxpayer heaven knows how many thousands of pounds) while the jurors waited in blissful ignorance.

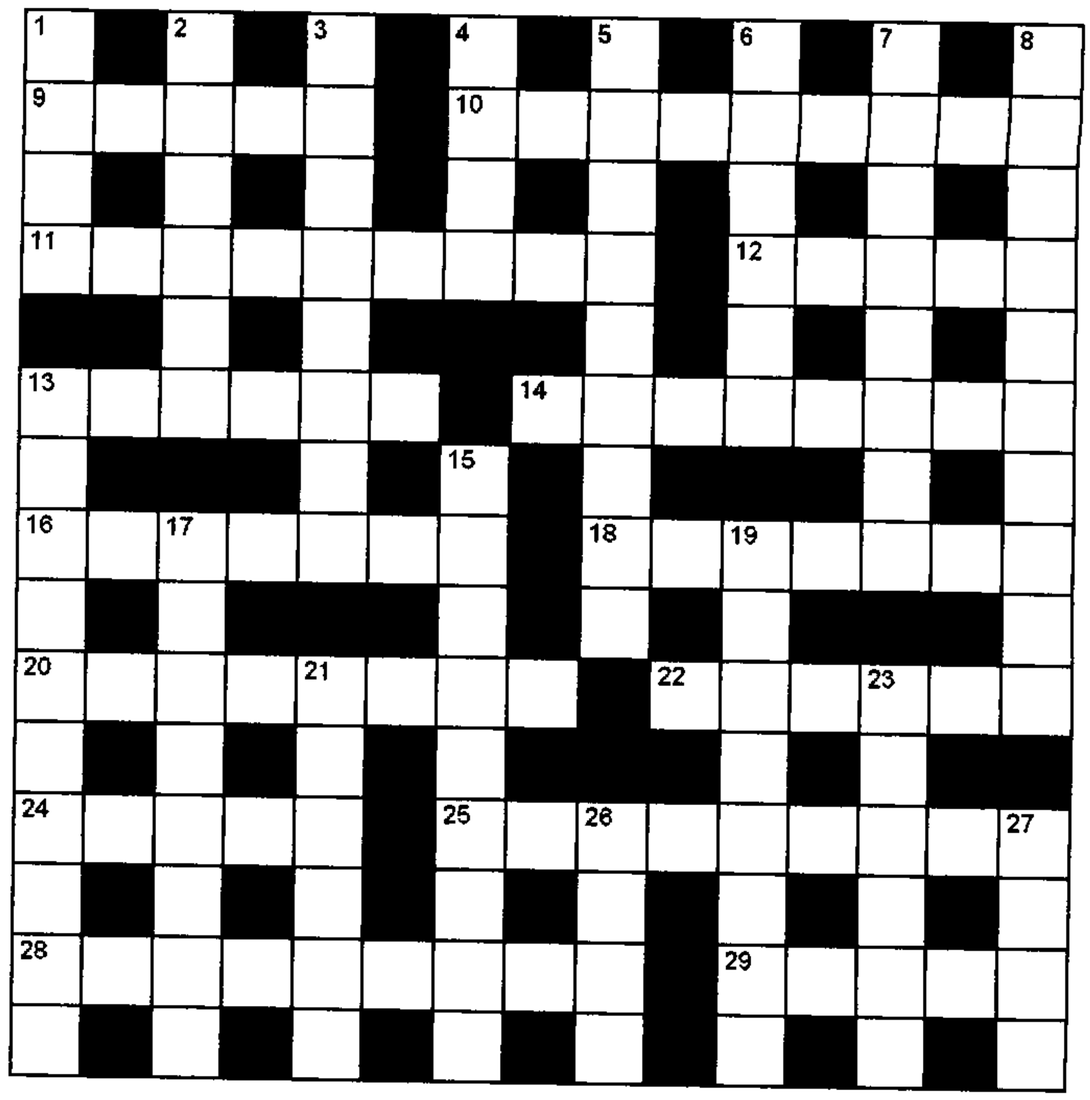
However, the jury made their views known about the time taken by m'learned friends towards the end of the trial when they insisted the judge delay his summing-up – which he had already started for over an hour – until they returned from their holidays, one in Africa, that they had booked on the judge's forecast that the trial would end by February. Having already lost one juror to illness, there was no wish to have a jury revolt or a retrial. So there was a four-week break from 17 March to 14 April before Judge Wadsworth began his summing up again. It is hoped this delay does not feature in a successful appeal.

But for now the SFO must hope that all's well that ends. As no doubt did the RBG jurors.

'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 364

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 9 May 2008

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk

ACROSS

9 A big lump found down under, as it's now called (5)

10 Archer-type account: "A lefty kiboshed outside broadcast!" (5,4)

11 Fastener hacks connected to sex machine (5-4)

12 Sample produced by *Eye* contributor (not Cyclops) (5)

13/14 Awful personal stink associated with 'Yobs' as exposed in the Eye (6,8)

16 Say "shag?" when one's taken out – absolutely! (7)

18 Oriental treatment dump contains argon – America flips (7)

20 Crown allied with Cabinet nutter! (8)

22 Forever wanting it low once male is inside (3,3)

24 Head from Lord Mayor (not Miles) flips Prince? (5)

25 Birds strip inside; they allow callers to have group intercourse (9)

28 Shit! Arse out round top of elasticated trousers (9)

29 Label Gordon "useless crud", Cameron "insecure", initially (5)

DOWN

1/27 Shag clubs, say, one-piece wear (4,4)

2 Murdoch's paper abandoned by Press Association in depression (6)

3 Brown's top, er, "guide" issues misinformation (3,5)

4 High tech police image of Ken Livingston's pet eating one (1-3)

5 A lark maybe at MP's place – a bit of a zoo? (9)

6 She's 22 medium (awful phony skirts) (6)

7 Fanny put by this dramatically? Talk fair! (8)

8 Means of having political opponents eliminated, quashed: data endlessly lost (5,5)

13 Queen's lowly consort? Unhealthy business (5,5)

15 Organ attached to electrical source; ball nestled here (3,6)

17 Getting hitched without ado, maybe competing for OBN? (8)

19 The same gooley-crushing dogma? (8)

21 Cop wants 100 dollars having eliminated Detective Sergeant (6)

23 After a short time, Bill in, elevated a sucker in the Oval Office (6)

26 Seat: source of many a politician's speech? (4)

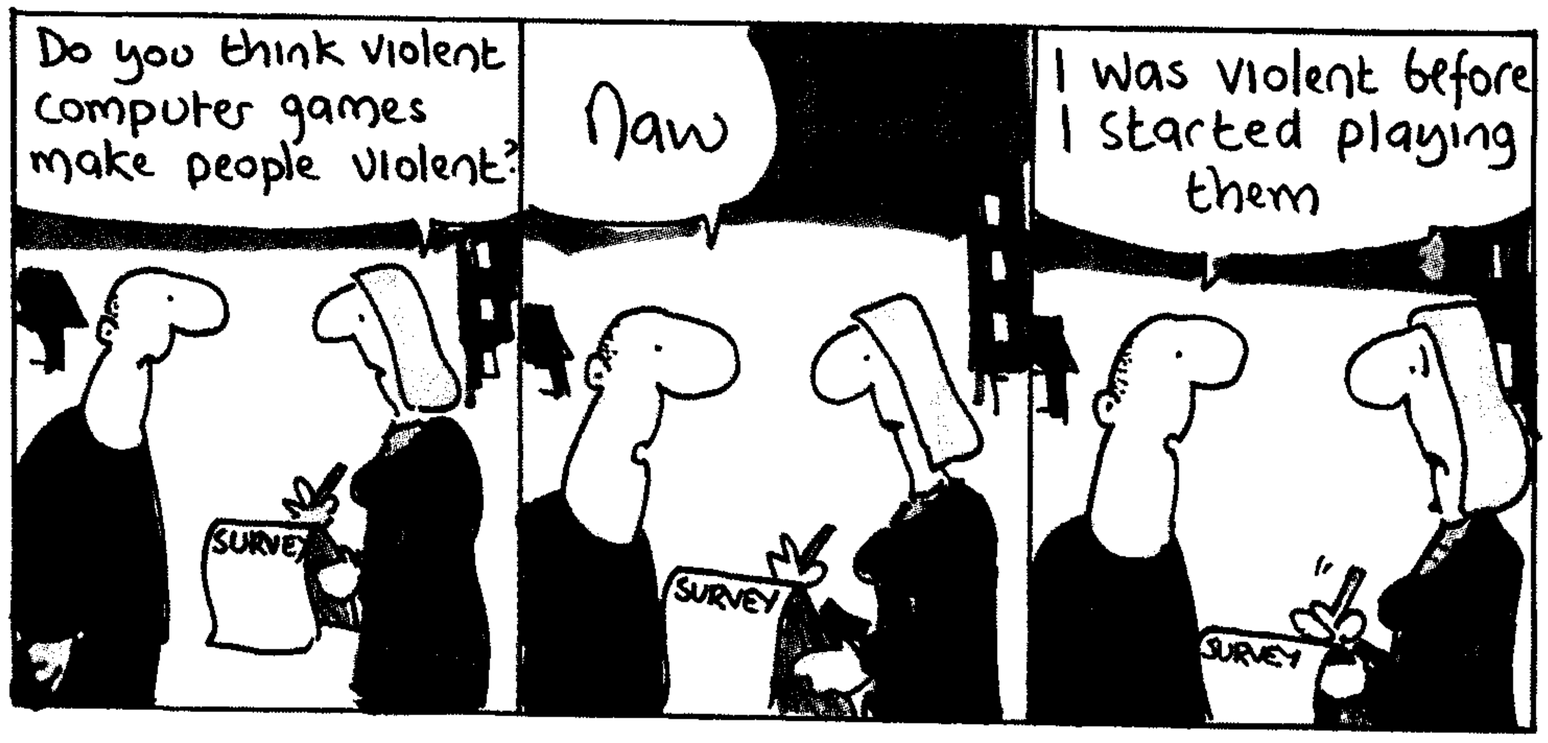
27 See 1dn.

Crossword 363 winner: STEPHEN GILLEN

ACROSS: 9 Pitch into 10 Crude 11 Times 12 Groveller 13 Pub grub 16 Spy ring 17 Campaign funds 21 Bespeak 22 Excrete 24 Redundant 26 Uncut 28 Elfin 29 Ejaculate.

Down: 1 Epitaph 2 Item 3 Chaser 4 Snog 5 No nonsense 6 Screw you 7 Bull fiddle 8 Peerage 14 Brassed off 15 Bricklayer 18 Pregnant 19 Aborted 20 Heathen 23 Caucus 27/25 Claptrap.

HUSBAND



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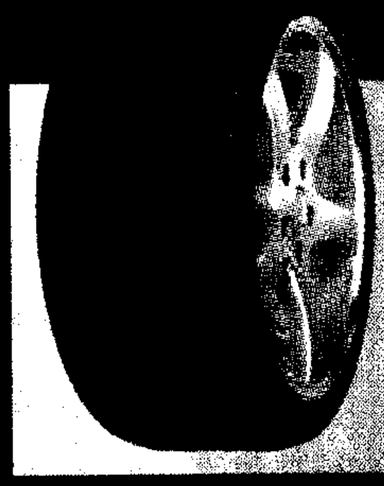

GOODYEAR

EAGLE F1 ◀

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BECAUSE NOT ALL TYRES ARE THE SAME –

Urgent Appeal to provide food packages for the people of Gaza

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The effects of sanctions, the reduction of critical fuel supplies, repeated military incursions and the closure of its borders have left over 1.2 million Gazans poverty-stricken. People's livelihoods have been destroyed and their human rights are under constant attack.

The siege has left three out of four people reliant on food aid to survive. Chronic malnutrition is becoming commonplace and infant mortality rates are soaring.

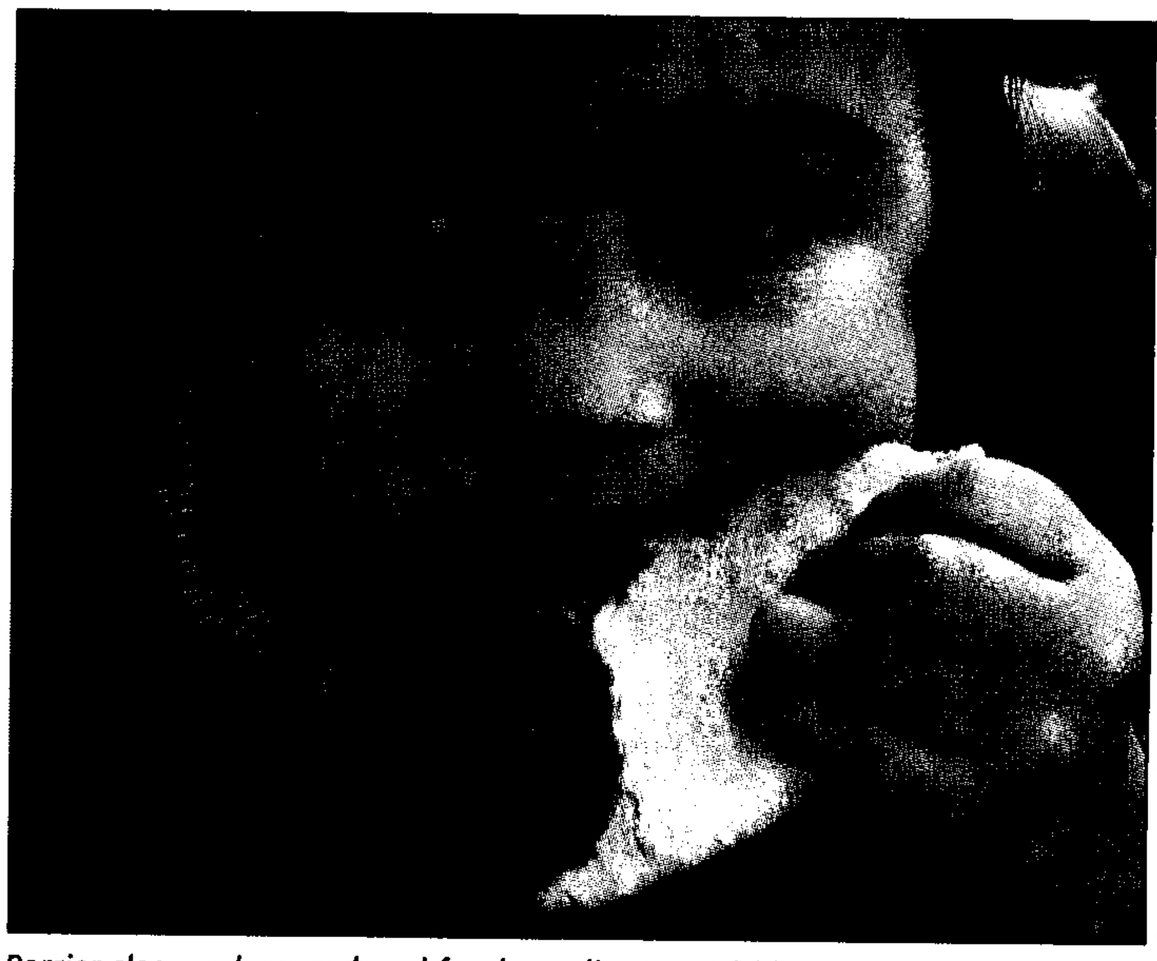
The closure of borders has meant that food prices have soared, resulting in a 98% reduction in meat purchases, an 86% reduction in dairy produce purchases and a 99% reduction in fruit purchases. MAP is one of the few international aid agencies that maintain a permanent and effective presence in Gaza. With your support, we will take urgent steps to reduce people's immediate suffering and pre-position emergency medical and food supplies **as it seems highly unlikely that the situation will improve in the immediate future.**

Our most pressing immediate task is to provide families with food. Please will you help by sending a donation of **£30 today, which will provide a family with a food package containing basics like rice, sugar, lentils, olive oil and corned beef. The package will last an average family for three weeks.**

Donate now: call 0207 226 7691 or visit www.map-uk.org

MAP will remain in Gaza and continue to provide vital longer-term medical support to the Palestinian people – providing access to clean water supplies, supporting children traumatised by ongoing conflict and caring for people with disabilities. But today we need your help so that we can provide families with food.

There is no end in sight to the collective punishment of Palestinians living in Gaza. Border closures have reduced the flow of agricultural produce, goods and medical supplies in and out of Gaza to a trickle. Scores of Palestinians have died as a result of being refused permission to access medical treatment outside of Gaza.



© Image supplied by Ma'an Images/Hatem Omar

Barrier closures have reduced food supplies to a trickle.

At the same time, while hospitals and clinics are desperately short of life-saving drugs and equipment, Israel controls most of Gaza's access to fuel and continues to limit supplies, with devastating humanitarian consequences.

MAP cannot, of course, solve these problems overnight. But what we can do, with your support, is to provide families with food and pre-position further medical and food supplies so that we are able to respond should the situation deteriorate further.

The situation for many families today is nothing short of desperate. We urgently need your support because anything you are able to give will help to save people's lives.

Your donation of £30 could help provide a family with a food package to last three weeks.

£300 could provide food packages to 10 families.

Over the coming weeks MAP will continue to do all we can to help meet the urgent needs of Palestinian men, women and children in Gaza.

Thank you for anything you are able to give to help.

I will help MAP to provide life-saving food supplies to Gaza

Please fill in this form, place in an envelope and return your completed form postage free to: Medical Aid for Palestinians, 33a Islington Park Street, FREEPOST ND6445, London N1 1BR. Thank you.

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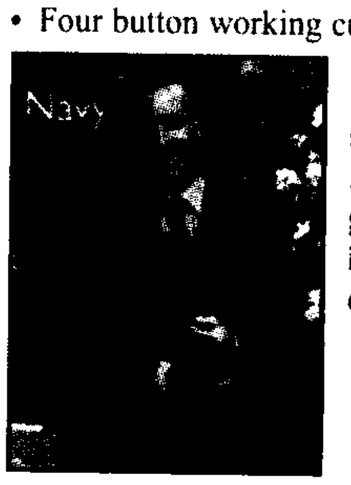

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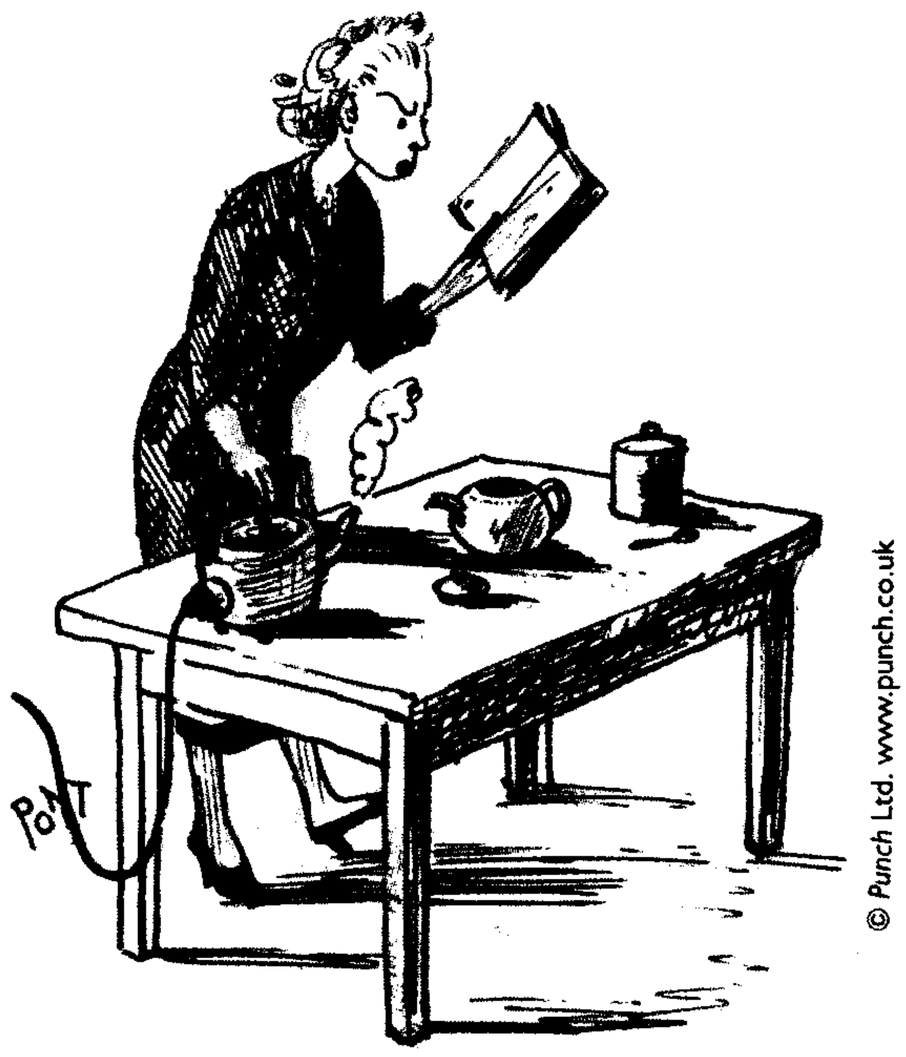

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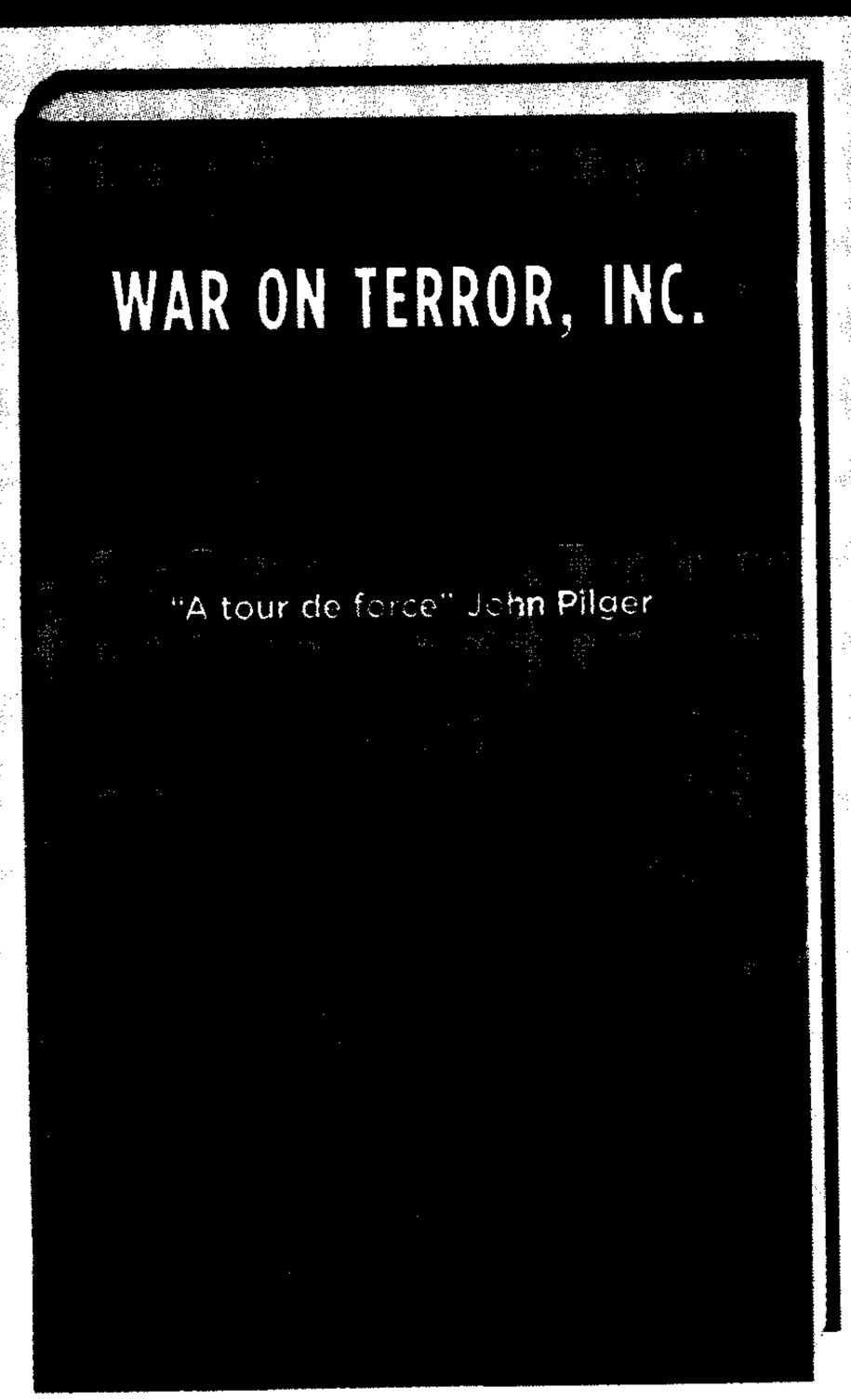

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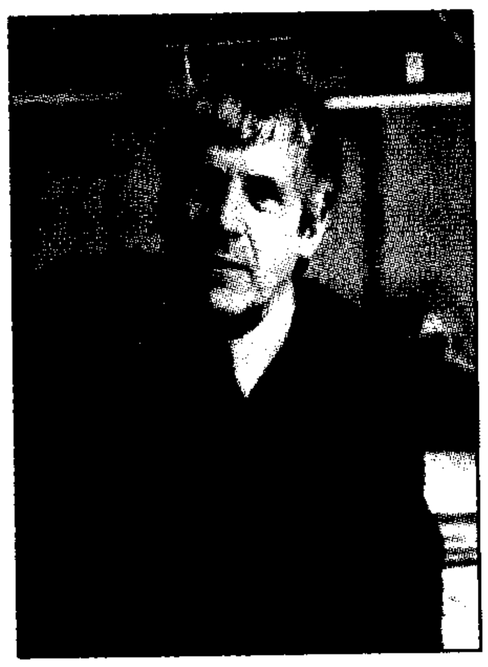

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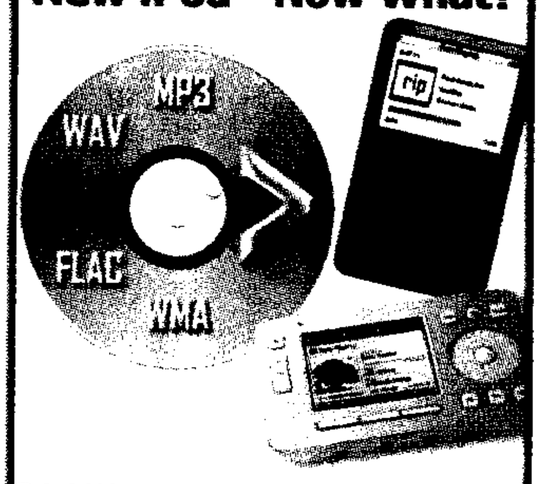

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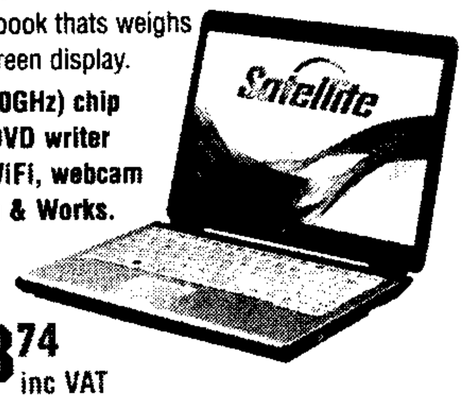

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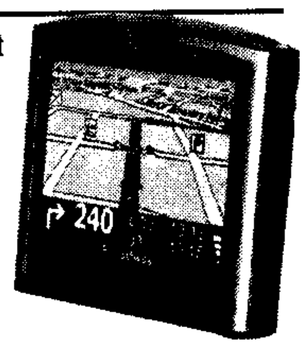

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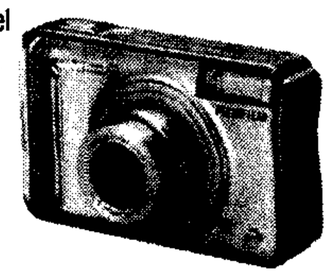

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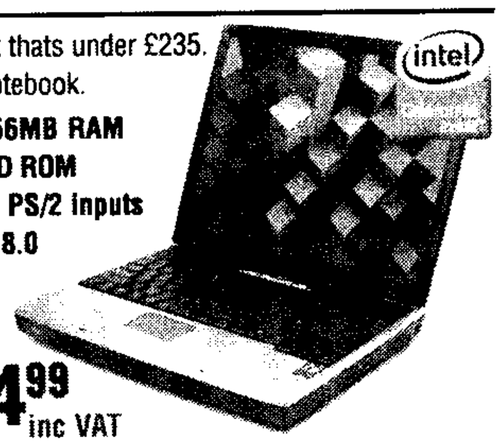

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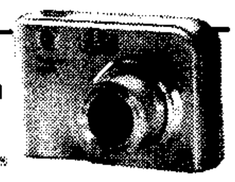
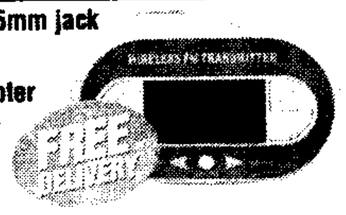


- **6.0 megapixel camera, 3x optical zoom**
- **1.7" display, easy to use menu, auto flash**
- **7 shooting modes, movie mode with sound**

Brand new stock, 1 year warranty

£42.54 ex VAT **£49.98** inc VAT

ATMT FM101 WIRELESS FM TRANSMITTER

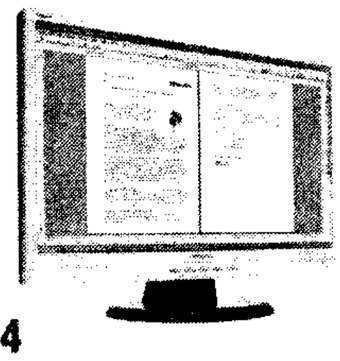


- **Connects to any audio players 3.5mm jack**
- **Tune into the best FM frequency**
- **Comes with cigarette lighter adapter**

Brand new stock, 6 month warranty

£6.99 ex VAT **£8.21** inc VAT

PHILIPS 19" WIDESCREEN



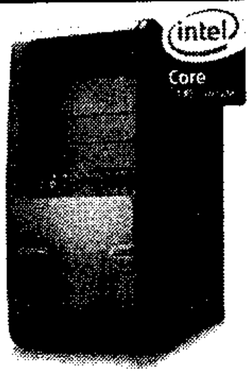
High resolution 19" widescreen monitor with a large viewing area.

- **1440 x 900 pixel WXGA+ res**
- **5ms response, 850:1 contrast**
- **Brightness & contrast controls**
- **Auto adjustment, VGA cable**

Stock status: Factory rework stock
Warranty: 6 month warranty

£89.99 ex VAT **£105.74** inc VAT

COMPAQ SR5109 DUAL CORE



HP Renew stock - boxed like new with a full warranty, all the quality you would expect from a new PC.

- **Intel Dual Core E2140 (2x 1.6GHz) processor**
- **1GB RAM, 160GB hard disk, dual layer DVD drive**
- **Intel GMA 950 251MB graphics, card reader**
- **Windows Vista Home Premium & Works**

Stock status: HP renew stock
Warranty: 1 year warranty

£199.99 ex VAT **£234.99** inc VAT

CREATIVE ZEN V PLUS 8GB

Ergonomic design MP3 music player and video player in glossy black and red finish.

- **8GB model - stores up to 4000 songs**
- **1.5" OLED colour screen, video player**
- **Built-in FM radio with 32 presets**
- **Rechargable battery - 15 hour playback**

Stock status: Brand new stock
Warranty: 1 year warranty

£59.99 ex VAT **£70.49** inc VAT

ONETEL DECT ANSWERPHONE

- **Single cordless handset with blue backlit display**
- **100 name/number phonebook, handsfree calling**
- **80 minute digital answerphone, 9 ringtones**

Brand new stock, 1 year warranty

£8.49 ex VAT **£9.98** inc VAT

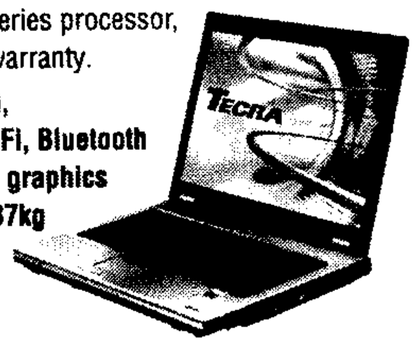
WENGER TETON BACKPACK

- **Swissgear backpack for up to 15.4" screens**
- **Padded notebook pocket and straps**
- **Extra front pockets and side netting**

Brand new stock, lifetime warranty

£16.99 ex VAT **£19.96** inc VAT

TOSHIBA TECRA M5 XP PRO



Professional laptop with Core 2 Duo 7 series processor, brand new - 3 year Toshiba worldwide warranty.

- **Intel Core 2 Duo T7220 (2 x 2.13GHz),**
- **1GB RAM, 100GB HD, DVD writer, WiFi, Bluetooth**
- **14.1" SXGA+ display, nVidia 128MB graphics**
- **Windows XP Professional, weighs 2.37kg**

Stock status: Brand new stock
Warranty: 3 year warranty

£399.99 ex VAT **£469.99** inc VAT

TOSHIBA

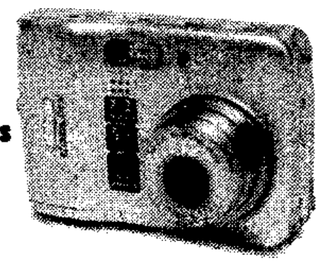
TOSHIBA 5.1 AUDIO & USB 2.0 LAN HUB

- **Combined external 5.1 sound card and USB 2.0 hub with LAN connection**
- **Add extra connectivity to your computer**

Brand new stock, 1 year warranty

£16.49 ex VAT **£19.36** inc VAT

NIKON COOLPIX L5 7.2 MP



Compact 7.2 megapixel camera with a powerful 5x optical zoom.

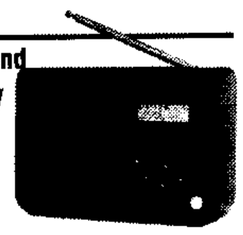
- **Large bright 2.5" LCD display**
- **Choice of 15 scene shooting modes**
- **Face priority AF, automatic flash**
- **Vibration reduction, movie mode**

Stock status: Factory rework stock
Warranty: 6 month warranty

£59.99 ex VAT **£70.49** inc VAT

Nikon

PURE DIGITAL ONE - BLACK

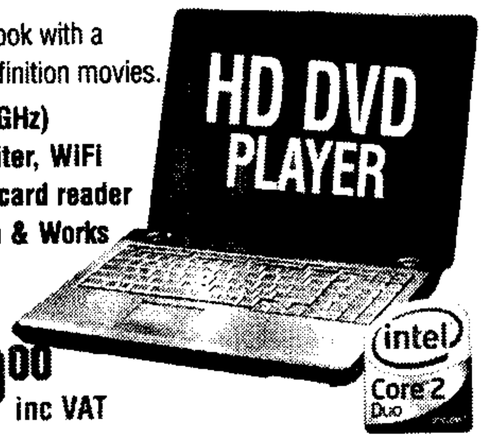


- **DAB radio with FM mode for hiss free sound**
- **Tune by station name, scrolling info display**
- **Clock, alarm & kitchen/sleep timers**

Factory rework stock, 1 year warranty

£24.99 ex VAT **£29.36** inc VAT

TOSHIBA P200-1EE CORE 2 DUO



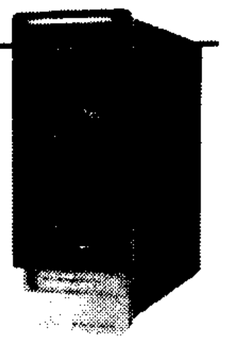
Brand new 17.1" widescreen notebook with a HD-DVD ROM for watching high definition movies.

- **Intel Core 2 Duo T5250 (2 x 1.5GHz)**
- **2GB RAM, 160GB HD, DVD writer, WiFi**
- **ATI 1.3GB graphics, webcam, card reader**
- **Windows Vista Home Premium & Works**

Stock status: Brand new stock
Warranty: 1 year warranty

£424.68 ex VAT **£499.00** inc VAT

HP SLIMLINE S3240



Not much desk space, no room for a tower PC? Check out our ultra compact HP PC.

- **AMD Athlon 4400+ (2x 2.3GHz) chip**
- **2GB RAM, 500GB HD, DVD writer**
- **ATI HD2400 1.3GB graphics, card reader**
- **Windows Vista Home Premium & Works**

Stock status: HP Renew stock
Warranty: 1 year warranty

£279.99 ex VAT **£328.99** inc VAT

CREATIVE STONE PLUS - 2GB MP3

- **Tiny MP3 player stores up to 1000 songs**
- **FM radio, microphone, clock, stopwatch**
- **Customizable shortcut button**

Brand new stock, 1 year warranty

£24.99 ex VAT **£29.36** inc VAT

CREATIVE

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New Oxford St	10.00am	6.00pm
Sunday	10.00am	4.00pm
New Oxford St	11.00pm	5.00pm

Maestro

Microsoft

UNSURE

Sam Spittle attended the TLC Centre in Wolverhampton, took free classes and job training, and took a giant step. He gained computer literacy and a clearer path to his potential. We're supporting the Black Country Consortium to develop and maintain learning centres where they're needed most. For the rest of his story and more useful facts, visit www.onmywayuk.com

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